SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE
Draft 15.8.07

Adapted by Simon Beaufoy from the novel Q and A.

INT. JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

An expensive bathroom suite. Excess of marble and gold taps. Into the bath, a hand is scattering rupee notes. Hundreds and hundreds of notes, worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. The sound of a fist thumping on the bathroom door, furious shouting from the other side.

JAVED O/S
Salim! Salim!

INT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. DAY.

Darkness. Then, glimpses of faces. In the half-light, shadowy figures move with purpose. An implacable voice announces.

TALKBACK V/O
Ten to white-out, nine, eight, seven...

PREM
Are you ready?

Silence. A hand shakes a shoulder a little too roughly.

PREM (CONT'D)
I said are you ready?

AMIR
Yes.

INT. JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

The thumping at the door continues. The sound of mumbled Indian prayer. Dull gleam of a pistol. A hand cracks the chamber open. Loads a single bullet and snaps the chamber shut. The hand clicks the cylinder round so that the bullet is in line with the hammer. Puts the pistol to his head. We still cannot see who this is.

TALKBACK V/O
...three, two, one, zero. Cue Prem, cue applause...

CONTINUED:

A finger tightens on the trigger. The gun fires. A millisecond of blood on the tiles, then an explosion of white light and suddenly, we are back in the studio.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

TALKBACK V/O
Go, Prem.

A wall of light and noise as the two walk on stage. Cheering, applause, music, banks of searing studio lights. On stage, Amir, an eighteen year-old Indian boy-man stares, petrified. He would surely turn and run but for the iron grip on his shoulder of the smiling host, Prem Kumar.

PREM
Welcome to Kaun Benega Crorepati-
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire!

More applause.

PREM (CONT'D)
Please give a warm welcome to our first contestant of the night- a local from our very own Mumbai!

Under cover of the wild applause, Prem ushers Amir towards the guest's chair, leaning in and hissing.

PREM (CONT'D)
Smile, dammit.

The lights seem to bore into him but Amir manages a tentative smile. Out of nowhere, a hand slaps him ferociously across the face. Then again and again. Blood trickles from his mouth.

INT. POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM. NIGHT.

The studio lights have seamlessly transformed into the harsh bulb of an interrogation light. Amir is strung from the ceiling by his arms.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Your name, bhen chod.

Sergeant Srinivas's hand pulls back Amir's head by the hair, forcing him to stare directly into the lights.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS (CONT'D)
Your name!

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Amir Malik.

And seamlessly we are back....

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

...on the set of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. Prem leans back in his chair, a man at home in his surroundings. Amir sits opposite, frozen.

PREM
So, Amir, tell us a bit about yourself.

Close on Amir's face. Without warning, it is shoved under water.

INT. BUCKET. NIGHT.

We look up from the bottom of the bucket at the screaming face of a drowning man. His head shakes desperately, pointlessly. Then Amir's face is dragged up again, roaring for breath. Close on his eyes.

AMIR V/O
I work in a hotel. In Juhu.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
Juhu! Smart area, Ladies and Gentlemen, smart area. And what do you do in this hotel, Amir?

AMIR
I am a Porter- Assistant Porter.

PREM
Assistant Porter! Okay!

On stage, Prem lifts his eyes just enough for the audience to catch the sarcasm. Amusement ruffles through them.

INT. GALLERY. DAY

In the studio gallery, the Director of the show looks up from his bank of television monitors. Frowns. Next to him, Johnson, the English Producer is also frowning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIRECTOR
He's not going to have one of those shows, is he?

JOHNSON
He'd better not. For his sake. Met SRK for lunch yesterday.

The Director turns in his chair.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
He's definitely interested.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
So, let's play *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire...*!

INT. POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM. DAY.

Amir's body dangles motionless from the ceiling. His head is bowed and he is moaning to himself. The ceiling fan thumps round slowly. In the corner, Sergeant Srinivas mops his brow and lights a cigarette. Hot work. The door opens and the Inspector of Police walks in. A rumpled man in his late forties who has seen pretty much everything. He eyes Amir, surprised.

INSPECTOR
Has he confessed, yet?

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Apart from his name, I can't get a word out of the runt.

INSPECTOR
You've been here all bloody night, Srinivas. What have you been doing?

Srinivas shrugs.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Tough guy.

INSPECTOR
A little electricity will loosen his tongue.

CONTINUED:

Sergeant Srinivas brings a box and a tangle of wires out of a cupboard and proceeds to put crocodile clips on Amir's fingers. The Inspector stares, deep in thought. Sweat trickles down his face. He wipes it away with a handkerchief, seems to be talking to himself.

INSPECTOR
Every night I get home, "why can't we have a/c like Bajan Chacha? Why don't you care about your poor family, dying in this heat." Twenty-four years a policeman and I can't afford bloody a/c.

Turns on Amir.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
But you. You've got half a million rupees ek dum guaranteed, yaar? And who knows how much further? Fancy the million, do you?

Amir just stares.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
I think you probably do.

The Inspector nods absently to Sergeant Srinivas who turns a handle. Amir's body pulsates and jerks. He screams. His body goes limp again. The Inspector goes over to Amir.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
So. Were you wired up? A mobile or a pager, correct? Some little hidden gadget? No? A coughing accomplice in the audience? Microchip under the skin, huh?

Sergeant Srinivas hadn't thought of that. Grabs Amir's arms and starts squeezing them all over until the Inspector has had enough.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
Srinivas! Look, it's hot, my wife is giving me hell, I've got a desk full of murderers, rapists, extortionists, assorted bum-fuckers...and you. Why don't you save us both a lot of time? Hmm?

Amir doesn't answer. The Inspector sighs and sits down. Looks at his watch, nods at Sergeant Srinivas again. Amir's body jerks with electric current.

CONTINUED: (2)

When the shudders and screams have subsided, the Inspector goes over to Amir's collapsed form. Clicks his fingers in front of Amir's face to check for a response.

INSPECTOR OF POLICE
He's unconscious, chutiya. What good is that? How many times have I told you-?

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Sorry, Sir.

The door opens and a Constable walks in.

CONSTABLE
The Englishman is here, Sir.

The Inspector turns to Sergeant Srinivas with heavy irony.

INSPECTOR
Aré wa, Srinivas! Now, we'll have Amnesty International in here peeing their pants about human rights. Get him down for God's sake and clean him up.

Sergeant Srinivas goes over to Amir and starts to undo the crocodile clips.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Maybe he did know the answers.

INSPECTOR
Have you gone soft, Srinivas? Professors, lawyers, doctors, General Knowledge Wallahs never get beyond sixty thousand rupees. And he's on half a million? What the hell can a slum dog possibly know?

Amir lifts his head.

AMIR
The answers.

He lifts his head, spits blood out of his mouth and says again, straight into the Inspector's face.

AMIR (CONT'D)
I know the answers.

Titles. **Slum Dog Millionaire.**

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

Over the titles we see Amir in handcuffs being shoved out of the interrogation room and into the Inspector's office. Amir is shoved into a chair. Sergeant Srinivas is making a belated attempt to smooth Amir's hair, straighten his shirt and fit him with a fake, clip-on tie as the door opens and the Inspector ushers in Mister Johnson, the English Producer of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire,* carrying video tapes and a pile of books. Johnson gives Amir a sidelong glance, rather shocked at his appearance.

INSPECTOR
A word, Mister Johnson.

They walk outside.

INT. CORRIDOR, POLICE STATION. DAY.

They stand in the corridor.

INSPECTOR
Sir, there is a long way and a short way of doing this.

JOHNSON
I'm not sure I follow, Inspector.

INSPECTOR
Obviously, the boy cheated.

JOHNSON
Obviously.

INSPECTOR
So, let's all save ourselves a lot of trouble. You throw him five thousand rupees to shut him up, we throw him back into the slum and everyone's happy, no?

JOHNSON
What a beautifully simple world that would be, Commisioner. Unfortunately, sixty-eight million people just watched that boy get to half a million rupees.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
If we can't prove he cheated, or more precisely if *you* can't prove he cheated, he goes back on the programme this evening for the million rupee question and we all look bloody fools in front of half the population of India. Get it?

Johnson looks at his watch.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)
You've wasted eight hours already. That leaves another ten, Inspector.

The Inspector watches him stalk down the corridor. Wipes the sweat from his face. Goes back into the room.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Constable fiddles with a video recorder. We get snatches of filmi dancing- heroines singing on mountainsides surrounded by implausible numbers of flags- cricket and finally after some shouting by the Inspector, *Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?*.

INSPECTOR
So, Mister Malik, the man who knows the answers. Talk.

We close in on the tv screen where Prem is smiling his crocodile smile and find ourselves....

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

...as Prem asks the first question.

PREM
So, Amir, Assistant Porter from Mumbai, are you ready for your first question for one thousand rupees.

AMIR
Yes.

PREM
Not bad money to sit in a chair and answer a question. Better than humping bags in a hotel, huh?

AMIR
No. Yes. No.

CONTINUED:

PREM
No. Yes. No. Apka final answer?

Laughter from the audience.

PREM (CONT'D)
Oh, boy. So, let's play *Kaun Benega Crorepati*. Your first question for one thousand rupees. Who was the star of the hit film Zanjeer?

EXT. CRICKET GROUND. DAY.

Bright sunlight filtered through the ever-present Mumbai dust. A group of children are playing cricket on a tarmac cricket ground. They are bare-foot, dressed in little more than rags, wiry-skinny and fast on their feet. Salim, a thick-set eleven-year old, polishes the ball on his almost non-existent shorts, comes in with surprising speed and bowls. The batsman hooks it high in the air. The bowler screams at a boy in the outfield.

SALIM
Amir! Catch it! Catch it!

The nine-year old Amir stares up at the ball, jinks around trying to get into position. He pays no heed to the rest of the children who are scattering fast to the edges of the tarmac. The ball seems suspended in the blue sky. Shouts from the other children seem very far away. He doesn't notice that they are screaming for him to get out of the way. Amir adjusts his feet for the perfect catch. Then out of nowhere, a light aircraft almost takes his head off as it comes in to land on the tarmac runway. Amir is knocked to his feet by the down-draft of the plane. The ball bounces away. Also flattened, Salim gets to his feet.

SALIM (CONT'D)
How could drop that? It was a sitter.

Then Salim's face turns to one of alarm.

EXT. AIRPORT PERIMETER. DAY.

At the back of a pack of children, Amir is running for his life, pursued by an ancient but surprisingly nimble Security Guard from the airport who is screaming abuse and wielding a long stick.

CONTINUED:

The kids dash across a rubbish dump and disappear down dozens of tiny lanes that run in between the shacks of the slum.

SECURITY GUARD
Private-ka land! Private-ka land! The planes won't kill you, mader chod, I will!

Amir and Salim break off, head down a separate lane. The Guard pursues them.

INT. JUHU SLUM. DAY.

The lanes in between the corrugated iron shacks are three feet wide, with an open drain running down the middle. Many of the precarious upper floors of the shacks have been built right over the paths, turning them into black tunnels. Tunnels shot through with slivers of light. If you didn't live here, you would be lost and frightened in minutes.

But these children are natives and with the practice of many years, Amir and Salim zig-zag down the warren of lanes.

They dodge past people cooking in the doorways, sleeping, washing clothes or in the case of Vinod, a naked four year-old, pissing into the drain. Salim shouts a warning.

SALIM
Oi! Vinod!

Without breaking step, they both jump expertly over the stream of piss. Not so the Security Guard who gets it all over his trousers, but doesn't stop the pursuit.

The two children charge past a shack filled to the roof with chickens in cages who all start squawking. They break out into the sunlight of the 'main road' of the slum lined with shops. It is packed: with people, stalls, bicycles and cows. All modern India is here, drinking tea, shouting at each other, selling food, playing carom, video games. Leaving a trail of shouting and wreckage behind them, the pair approach a brand new Mercedes almost blocking the lane. Beside it stands Javed, an impressive man in a beautiful suit and his two Minders. Amir and Salim skid to a stop, put their hands together in respectful greeting and edge ever so carefully past the immaculate paintwork of the car.

Still in pursuit, the Security Guard also slides carefully past the car with deprecating bows and smiles.

CONTINUED:

On past the chi stall where a crowd has gathered to watch a hindi film blaring from the tv rigged up overhead. The irate Security Guard gets tangled up in a bicycle. Amir and Salim stop to give him a taunting, hip-gyrating parody of the dance on the tv before scooting down another tunnel. They break out into sunlight again.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Amir!

Amir skids to a halt, bumping into Salim who is already frozen.

AMIR
Shit. Mamaji.

AMIR'S MOTHER
Don't you move a muscle.

The Security Guard arrives and he too skids to a halt at the sight of Amir's mother.

AMIR'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Thank you, Mister Gupta. I will deal with these two.

The Guard puts his hands together in grudging respect as Amir's Mother lifts each skinny kid off the floor by their t-shirt and marches them down the road.

INT. SCHOOL. DAY.

The two renegades are dumped by Amir's Mother into their desks. Mister Nandha, the teacher, stands and crashes an English book down on Salim's head. *The Three Musketeers.*

MISTER NANDHA
Salim.

Salim opens the book. Amir glances over and turns the book the right way round for Salim.

SALIM
I know!

Mister Nandha hovers over Amir's head. He winces in anticipation.

MISTER NANDHA
And Amir.

The book comes down like thunder. Amir blinks from the impact and suddenly we are back....

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
So. You a movie fan, Amir? Remember, you have three lifelines if you're not sure of your answer- Ask the Audience, 50/50 and Phone a Friend. The question one more time. Who was the star of the 1973 hit film Zanjeer. Is it A-

Close on Amir's eyes.

INT. SHACK. NIGHT.

A tiny shack. A garland of dirty plastic flowers surrounds a torn flyer for one of Amitabh Bacchan's films.

EXT. JUHU SLUM. RUBBISH DUMP. DAY.

Salim is sitting on a chair at the end of a rickety wooden pier, though it is not water, but a sea of rubbish and sewage that lies below them. There are dozens of these piers protruding from the slum onto airport land, each with a toilet shack perched right at the end. Another man hurries up the pier and hands Salim a coin.

SALIM
Bhai, get out of there. Prakash wants a shit.

AMIR O.S.
Not finished.

PRAKASH
Stop your time-pass. This is urgent.

AMIR O.S.
It's a shy one. Since when was there a time limit on a crap?

SALIM
Since there was a customer waiting, that's when.

AMIR O.S.
(singing/ grunting)
Come on out, you beauty, unveil yourself, my darling-warling....

CONTINUED:

PRAKASH
Look, kid, I got a bad stomach...

A disturbing combination of heaving and snake-charmer noises come from the toilet shack. Finally Prakash can stand it no longer.

PRAKASH (CONT'D)
I'm off to Devi's bog. Give me that.

He snatches the coin back from Salim and hurries off. Salim bangs on the toilet door.

SALIM
You just lost me good money, you stupid idiot-

Salim stops. In the distance, there is the faint sound of shouting, a crowd coming closer. Then the crowd bursts through the outer shacks of the slum, pour onto the rubbish dump and make for the airfield.

MAN
It's Amitabh! That's his helicopter!

AMIR O.S.
Amitabh? Amitabh Bacchan?

INT/EXT. TOILET. DAY.

Amir peers through one of the many cracks in the shack. He sees crowds surging around the pier, charging towards a landing helicopter. Salim shoves the chair under the door handle- effectively locking it- and runs down the pier to join the chase. Amir pulls up his shorts.

AMIR
No! Wait! Salim, sala! Salim!

Rattles the locked door, stares hopelessly at the disappearing crowd.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Wait! Amitabh....

He looks down the toilet hole at the sewage beneath him, the landing helicopter, the disappearing crowd. A final rattle of the door. There is only one way out. He jumps down the hole, sprawling headlong into a year's worth of human waste. Alive- if covered in shit- he pulls a torn flyer out of his pocket and runs for the helicopter.

CONTINUED:

AMIR (CONT'D)
Amitabh-ji! Amitabh-ji!

Salim is at the back of the crowd, trying to force a way through, but the adults shove him back. Not so for Amir. The down-draft from the helicopter flicks bits of sewage from his clothes. Disgusted fans curse him and get out of his way. Suddenly, the red sea parts and there is nobody between Amir and Amitabh Bacchan getting out of the helicopter.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Please. Amitabh-ji.

Amir holds out his grubby flyer. Used to signing autographs, the movie star barely looks at Amir. He takes the flyer, then notices something distinctly unpleasant on it. To Amir's delight, he scribbles distastefully on it.

AMIR (CONT'D)
A thousand thanks, Amitabh-ji.

Amir gets down on his knees and tries to kiss Amitabh's feet, but Amitabh takes a couple of steps back, now fully aware where the smell is coming from. Amir crawls faster, causing Amitabh to start skipping backwards. There is a brief, undignified chase, then he throws the flyer at Amir as his bodyguards surround him and hustle him into a car. Amir chases the flyer across the tarmac, grabs it. Kisses it.

EXT. JUHU SLUM. NIGHT.

From high up, the rickety tin roof-tops of the slum seem to stretch to the horizon. There is a distant shout, a figure waving an arm.

MAN
It's coming!

Then another shout and another, a chain of voices coming closer. People come out of their doorways with pails and buckets. The shouts come closer until we see a naked figure entirely encased in bubbles dancing and singing in the lane. Amir is the happiest boy in the slum.

AMIR
(singing)
Amitabh, Amitabh, oh Amitabh! I have your autograph, oh, holy Amitabh!

CONTINUED:

MOTHER
Here it comes!

Water comes bubbling through a hose and Amir's mother hoses down her ecstatic son.

EXT. JUHU SLUM. NIGHT.

Not far away, Salim wanders to Mister Chi's stall. He glances around to make sure everybody is glued to the hindi film on Mister Chi's tv and surreptitiously slips Mister Chi the signed flyer. Mister Chi takes a look and gives Salim a small wad of rupees. He sticks the money in his pocket, slinks away.

EXT. JUHU SLUM. NIGHT.

A tear-stained Amir is furiously trying to batter Salim, but Salim's extra strength and height means that he can keep Amir at bay with one hand, Amir's flailing fists punching thin air.

AMIR
Sala! Sala!

Salim's laughter only makes Amir cry harder.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

Close on the tv screen in the Inspector's office. Prem ponders Amir's choice. Presses a button on his computer.

PREM
You chose A- Amitabh Bacchan.
Guess what? You just won a
thousand rupees!

Applause on screen. The Inspector looks at Amir. Amir shrugs.

AMIR
You don't have to be a genius.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
I knew it was Amitabh.

AMIR
Like I said.

Sergeant Srinivas twists Amir's arm behind his back, evincing a squeal of pain from Amir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMIR (CONT'D)
(squealing)
He's the most famous man in India...!

The Inspector stares at Amir, turns back to the tv where Prem is asking the next question.

PREM
For two thousand five hundred rupees....the national emblem of India is a picture of three lions. What is written underneath? Is it...

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
...A) The truth alone triumphs. B) Lies alone triumph. C) Fashion alone triumphs. D) Money alone triumphs.

Prem shoots a mock puzzled look out to the audience eliciting giggles from them.

PREM (CONT'D)
What do we think, Amir? The most famous phrase in our country's history. Maybe you want to phone a friend?

Laughter from the audience. The studio lights bear down on Amir. a drop of sweat trickles down his forehead. Prem is loving his discomfort.

PREM (CONT'D)
Or Ask the Audience? I have a hunch they might just know the answer. What do we think?

He gestures expansively at his audience. Oh, they love him.

AMIR
Yes.

PREM
(startled)
Yes?

AMIR
Ask the audience.

CONTINUED:

Prem whistles. Raises his eyes at the audience.

PREM
Well, you're the contestant, Amir. Put the poor man out of his misery, Ladies and Gentlemen. Press your key-pad now.

The lights dim. Portentous music.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Inspector presses pause. Sighs.

INSPECTOR
So, Amir. My five-year-old daughter knows the answer to that, but you don't. Strange for a Lakhpati genius. What happened? Your accomplice nip out for a piss, did he? Or did he just not cough loud enough?

Silence. Sergeant Srinivas kicks Amir's chair.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
The Inspector asked you a question.

AMIR
How much is bhelpuri at Jeevan's stall on Chowpatty Beach?

INSPECTOR
What?

AMIR
One bhelpuri. How much?

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
(can't help himself)
Ten rupees.

AMIR
Wrong. Fifteen since Divali. Who stole Constable Varma's bicycle outside Dadar Station last Thursday?

INSPECTOR
(amused)
You know who that was?

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Everyone in Juhu knows that. Even five year-olds.

Despite himself, the Inspector laughs. Gets the point. But stares long at Amir, before pressing 'play'.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
The audience has chosen. And, whaddya know? Ninety-nine percent of them think the answer is A). The truth alone triumphs. What do we think? A hundred percent would have made me a little more reassured, maybe....

Prem makes a show of examining his computer.

PREM (CONT'D)
Are you married, Amir?

AMIR
No.

PREM
Well, don't despair, there's someone out there who thinks "Fashion alone triumphs" is our national motto. You two could be very well matched.

Audience laughter.

INT. GALLERY. DAY

Johnson is staring down at Prem.

JOHNSON
What the bloody hell is he playing at? He's way off script...

DIRECTOR
Split up with his girl-friend.

VISION MIXER
Which one?

CONTINUED:

DIRECTOR
All three, I heard. Nita as well. Back with the wife. She's pregnant again. Stand by white out.

JOHNSON
Oh, God, that's all we need....

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
...won two thousand five hundred rupees!

Music, lights, applause.

PREM (CONT'D)
One more question before the commercial break. What will our Assistant Porter do next?

The lights dim. Prem presses his computer.

PREM (CONT'D)
Religion! Interesting. For five thousand rupees, when King Dashrath ordered Lord Ram into a fourteen year exile, who accompanied him?

EXT. SLUM. MISTER CHI'S STALL. DAY.

Instead of the usual slum chaos, there is a strange quiet in the slum. A silent crowd has gathered around Mister Chi's, watching the large tv set. Amir and Salim try to get a view of what is on: news footage of the destruction of the Babri Masjid. Some people in the crowd are crying openly, some look furious. Others stand in doorways watching with just a hint of pleasure.

INT. RAM'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

A sound so quiet, we might not have heard it. A deep drum beat. Amir and Salim lie on a mattress, asleep. On another mattress lies their sleeping mother. The drum beats get louder, followed by the faint sound of chanting. Amir wakes, listens. Prods Salim. They sit up. Together, they go to the door and out.

EXT. NIGHT. SLUM.

Amir and Salim creep through the deserted alleyways of the slum, heading for the sound of the drum beats. Slipping out of another door, comes their friend Krishna. Through gaps in the streets, tantalising glimpses of, fierce faces lit by lanterns. Then, they round a corner and suddenly are confronted by a wall of colour and noise and threat: three decorated Gods on a processional chariot, surrounded by chanting acolytes and men banging drums.

ACOLYTES
Om Jai Jagdeesh Haré! Om Jai Jagdeesh Haré!

Amir stares at the Gods.

AMIR
Who are they?

Krishna stares at him.

KRISHNA
You don't know?

Amir shakes his head. Behind them, Amir's Mother appears.

AMIR'S MOTHER
Come! Come away!

She pushes the two children back down the street. Krishna watches them go then turns back to the procession.

KRISHNA
Om Jai Jagdeesh Haré!

EXT. DHOBI. JUHU SLUM. DAY.

Right next to the railway lines is a pond of dirty water surrounded by shacks in which dozens of women are washing clothes. Trains flash past only feet away from them. Down the other end of the pond, Amir and Salim are splashing noisily with Krishna and some friends. Amir's mother pauses in her scrubbing, wipes sweat from her forehead and gazes up at the leaden sky.

CONTINUED:

Amir is trying to intercept the ball that Salim and Krishna are throwing to each other. He's not having much success. The ball flies overhead again from Salim to Krishna. Amir dives for it, misses and goes underwater. When he comes up for air, he shakes his head, clearing his ears of water. Then he stops, listens. Shakes his head again. Definitely something strange. Thunder? Salim and Krishna are trading catches, unaware that anything has changed. But Amir's mother has heard it too. The faintest sound of shouting, roaring. The wave of noise is still faint but getting louder. A frozen moment broken by:

MOTHER
Run! Amir, Salim, run!

Everybody stares at her. A train speeds through as she continues to shout, her words lost beneath the thundering train.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Go! Run!

The train goes through, the last carriage flying past suddenly opening up the sight of a wall of rioting men wielding clubs, scythes, metal bars. They come screaming across the railway tracks.

SALIM
Krishna, quick!

Salim holds out his hand to Krishna who is wading with difficulty through the water.

KRISHNA
No way! You're a bloody Muslim.
Get away from me!

The rioters leap the tracks and are upon them.

KRISHNA (CONT'D)
They're Muslims! Him and him!

MOTHER
Go!

Salim and Amir scramble out and retreat into the lanes. Amir turns to see his Mother felled by a rioter. She is surrounded by screaming, chanting men who rain blows down on her. Salim grabs Amir and drags him down an alley. As they head down the alley, they get glimpses of burning houses, fleeing women. An eleven-year old girl ducks out of a doorway and runs after them.

CONTINUED: (2)

They turn a corner and head towards some vans full of police. Amir sees Mister Nandha, the school teacher, stops.

AMIR
Salim!

Then Mister Nandha starts walking towards him. An oasis of calm in the chaos. Amir looks at him with relief.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Mister Nandha.

Mister Nandha smiles, walks towards them.

MISTER NANDHA
Ram nam satya hai, Babri Masjid dhvasth hai.

AMIR
Mister Nandha?

MISTER NANDHA
We have destroyed your mosque. Now, the followers of Ram will drive you dogs out of our city.

From behind his back he produces a knife and runs towards Amir, screaming.

MISTER NANDHA (CONT'D)
Ram has returned to his temple! Ram has returned!

They flee, racing past a small temple. A flash of each God: Ram, Sita, Lakshman as the children scramble past.

PREM V/O
Was it A) Sita and Lakshman, B) Sita and Bharat, C) Bharat and Shatrughan, D)Sita and Hanuman.

INT. STREET. DAY.

They reach the safety of the police vans. But inside the vans, the police are smoking, laughing, playing cards. Down the street, a man comes whirling out of a doorway, his hair on fire. He falls into the middle of the street and is engulfed by rioters. Unperturbed, the police continue to chat. Salim and Amir look on, horrified. Then one of the police men turns, looks at them. Is interested. Motions to a colleague. Puts out his cigarette with purpose.

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Let's go, bhai.

Salim and Amir run. The girl follows.

EXT. MUMBAI. DAY.

Salim and Amir stand on a hill overlooking the city. Black smoke billows from a large area that is clearly the Juhu slum. Standing a little way off is the girl.

AMIR
We should go back.

Silence.

AMIR (CONT'D)
See if Ama-

Salim shakes his head fiercely, silencing Amir for a moment. But only a moment.

AMIR (CONT'D)
What about Jeevan Chacha?

Salim shakes his head.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Maybe he-

Salim shakes his head again.

SALIM
- I saw him. He was with them.

AMIR
But he wouldn't hurt-

SALIM
- he was with them!

AMIR
But-

SALIM
- shut up, Amir, can't you? Just shut up!

Salim turns away and sees the girl. Picks up a rock and hurls it at her. She dodges, takes a couple of steps back but makes no real attempt to get away. He finds another rock and hurls this in her direction too.

CONTINUED:

SALIM (CONT'D)
Ja!

Then a flash of lightning and thunder rumbles across the city. Rain begins to come down.

AMIR
What shall we do?

No answer. Amir sits down. Salim sits down. At a distance, the girl sits down. Rain pours down their faces.

INT. BUILDER'S YARD. NIGHT.

Rain as you've never seen. A pile of huge water pipes in a sprawling builder's yard. Amir is in one pipe, Salim above him in another. They are both soaked, shivering, but have found some plastic sheet to wrap themselves in. Outside, thirty feet away, stands the girl. Staring. Salim hisses angrily at the girl.

SALIM
Go away. Ja, ja!

The girl might not even have heard.

SALIM (CONT'D)
She'll have the Security Guard onto us, standing there.

AMIR
Not if we let her in.

SALIM
No.

AMIR
She could be the third musketeer.

SALIM
Grow up, Amir. I am the head of this family, now. And I say no. Piss off, you.

Salim huddles down in the pipe. After a while, Amir follows suit.

SALIM (CONT'D)
We don't even know what the third musketeer's called.

EXT. JUHU SLUM. DAY

A flash of Amir's mother being clubbed to the ground. Her scream.

INT. BUILDER'S YARD. LATER.

Amir wakes with a jolt and a scream half-swallowed in his mouth. He shuts his eyes tight, trying to force the image out. His breathing slows and he sees the girl staring at him. The rain is still falling. She goes back to drawing shapes in the mud with her finger. Amir stares at her for a moment, then holds open the plastic sheet. She darts across, jumps into the water pipe and huddles up next to Amir.

AMIR
I'm Amir.

She looks at him.

AMIR (CONT'D)
My name is Amir.

She opens her mouth, but nothing comes out. She shakes her head. Huddles in a ball. Amir notices something on the back of her shirt. Lifts it slightly. Sees bloody weals, a mess of bruised skin. The girl pulls the shirt around her.

INT. COMMISIONER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Amir looks at the Inspector.

AMIR
You think I don't wake up every morning wishing I didn't know the answer to that question? If it wasn't for Ram and Allah, I would still have a Mother.

INT. STUDIO. DAY

AMIR
A) Sita and Lakshman.

PREM
Final answer?

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Final answer.

Prem stares at him for dramatic effect. Presses his computer.

PREM
Computer-ji, *A* lock kiya-jaye.

The lights dim, the music swells.

PREM (CONT'D)
Amir Malik, you said Sita and Lakshman accompanied Lord Ram on his fourteen year exile. And guess what? You've just won five thousand rupees! Time for a commercial break- don't go away, now.

Music, applause. Prem gets up and heads backstage.

PREM (CONT'D)
Got lucky, huh? I'd take the money. You'll never get the next one.

INT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. DAY.

In the half-light, backstage, Prem approaches Nita the make-up girl. She dabs his face with powder.

PREM
Meet me after the show. Please.

NITA
No.

PREM
Nita, I can explain.

NITA
No need. I happened to read it in *Stardust*. "Prem's happiness with another baby on the way". Didn't even have the balls to tell me, you bastard.

PREM
Nita, it all happened before I met you, sweetheart. I swear to you.

CONTINUED:

NITA
You met me two years ago. What is she, an elephant?

PREM
Look, her and I- nothing. How could I, when heaven is here?

NITA
Not anymore it isn't.

But Prem just blows her a kiss and struts back onstage.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

Prem sits back down in his seat.

AMIR
You're from the Juhu slum, aren't you?

PREM
Sure. Know where I live now, kid? Pali Hill. Twelve bedrooms, a/c in every room, two kitchens, a gym and a screening room. Steel balls is what it takes, my friend, steel balls.

The Floor Manager comes over and gives his head-phones set to Prem. Prem listens.

JOHNSON V/O
Prem? Tone it down, for goodness sake. You're making him a laughing stock.

Prem glances up at the gallery with contempt.

PREM
We're having fun here. They love it...Where the hell do you get them from?

He makes no attempt to hide the conversation from Amir.

JOHNSON V/O
It's supposed to be a quiz show, not a blood sport.

FLOOR MANAGER
Fifteen seconds.

CONTINUED:

PREM
Stop wetting your pants. I'll be a good little boy with the next one. Promise.

He chucks the head-phones at the Floor Manager.

PREM (CONT'D)
Okay, Juhu boy, you've had a good run. Take your Mother to Khandala and eat some chiki.

AMIR
My Mother's dead.

PREM
Well, your girlfriend then. Even better.

AMIR
I don't have a girl-friend.

PREM
Live wire like you? You surprise me.

FLOOR MANAGER
Ten seconds.

AMIR
Nor do you.

PREM
What?

AMIR
Have a girl-friend. By the look of it.

FLOOR MANAGER
Five, four...

Prem whips his head around to see Nita miming cutting her throat at Prem. The warm-up man starts the applause.

TALKBACK V/O
....three, two, one...

Cheering and music. Prem switches on his charm.

PREM
Welcome back to *Kaun Benega Crorepati?*
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PREM (CONT'D)
Our contestant, Amir Malik, a Porter- sorry, *Assistant* Porter- from Mumbai, is on five thousand rupees and has already used one lifeline: Ask the Audience. So, my friend: are you ready for the next question?

AMIR
Yes.

PREM
Let's play.

Portentous music. The lights dim.

PREM (CONT'D)
For ten thousand rupees. The British architect Frederick Stevens designed which famous building in India? Is it: A) The Taj Mahal. B) Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. C) India Gate. D) Howrah Bridge. What do you think, Amir? Are you one of those Assistant Porters with a penchant for architecture?

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

Known to everyone as VT station, this monument to Victorian railway architecture is a dangerous place to be at rush hour. Even before the train has stopped, men are jumping from the open doors, or vaulting out of the windows or from the roof of the train to join the tens of thousands of Mumbaites streaming to and from work. A seventeen-year old Amir squeezes himself out of a train and shoves through the crowds. He checks the time. The digital numerals flick to five O'clock. Looks around the tide of humanity.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
So, what's it to be? Walk away and this cheque for five thousand rupees is yours. Look, it's even got your name on it.

He produces a cheque and waves it at Amir.

AMIR
I don't have a bank account.

CONTINUED:

Laughter from the audience. Prem is momentarily wrong-footed.

AMIR (CONT'D)
But I'll take cash.

More laughter, this time with Amir, rather than at him. Prem gets up and starts rummaging theatrically through his jacket pockets and trousers.

PREM
Nope. Looks like the Producer's stolen my wallet again-

AMIR
- I'll play.

Nobody was expecting this. Least of all Prem who has to rearrange his features into one of surprised delight. He sits down.

PREM
You'll play?

AMIR
Why not?

PREM
Well, well, well. We've got a wild one, here.

Prem tears up the cheque with theatrical slowness.

PREM (CONT'D)
For ten thousand rupees, Ladies and Gentlemen, the question once again....

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

The digital clocks show five fifteen. Shoving the descending river of people out of his way, the seventeen year-old Amir is forging a path up steps that cross the platforms. He pushes to the middle of the footbridge and leans out on the side railings. He scans the sea of people, desperately. Then he sees her: the eighteen year-old Latika, heart-stoppingly beautiful, over the other side of the station. A world away. She is scanning the crowd, as wired as he is.

AMIR
Latika! Latika!

CONTINUED:

But though he is screaming her name, his voice is swallowed by the noise around him. Then he sees Salim and another man also fighting a way towards her.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Latika!

Frightened now, he fights his way down the steps, one figure against an army of white-robed people. He gets to the bottom of the steps, is making progress against the tide. But so are the two men. Amir is now on the same platform. Shouts her name again. She turns with a smile. But Salim and his Man leap through a train onto her platform. She starts running, is lost in the crowd. Salim turns towards Amir, points a hatred-filled finger at him.

ACCOMPLICE
Salim!

He turns and runs off along the platform after Latika.

AMIR
Latika! Latika!

AMIR V/O
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus.

PREM V/O
Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus.
Sure?

AMIR V/O
I think so.

PREM V/O
You *think* so. A brave man, Ladies and Gentlemen, a brave man.

By the time Amir has fought himself to where Latika was- she is gone. He whirls around, mad with frustration.

AMIR
Latika! Latika!

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

The commuters have mostly gone. Amir is pacing the platform desperately. He stops, stares blankly at the statue in front of him- a proud, rather pompous figure in a Victorian frock coat. The plaque reads: Frederick Stevens.

INT. COMMISIONER'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Inspector, Srinivas and Amir are staring at the video recorder.

AMIR
Yes. Final answer. Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus.

PREM
Is the right answer! Ten thousand rupees to you, Sir!

Applause and music. The Inspector presses pause. Stares at Amir.

INSPECTOR
And did she come back?

Amir smiles sadly.

AMIR
I wouldn't be here if she had.

INSPECTOR
Pretty was she?

Amir stares down at his feet.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
Guess not.

Right in the eyes.

AMIR
The most beautiful woman in the world.

Sergeant Srinivas snorts. Suddenly, Amir is out of his chair and at Srinivas' throat. The combined force of the Inspector and Srinivas force him roughly back down. He is again handcuffed to the chair.

COMMISIONER OF POLICE
Well, well. The slum dog barks. Money or women. The reason for most mistakes in life. Looks like you got mixed up with both. Srinivas, you need the exercise: a trip to VT Station to check on the statue. And lock your bloody bike up.

CONTINUED:

Sergeant Srinivas swears under his breath but bumbles out.

COMMISIONER OF POLICE (CONT'D)
That's the chutiyé out the way.
Now, tell me about her.

A long pause as Amir decides whether to trust or not.

AMIR
It started with the bean bags.

INSPECTOR OF POLICE
Bean bags?

EXT. MUMBAI STREET. NIGHT.

In the darkness, Amir is studying a piece of paper and reading out numbers from it. There is something not quite right about Amir- perhaps the fact that there are two feet by his ears. Salim is standing on his shoulders and spraying the numbers on a wall with an aerosol and a certain lack of confidence.

AMIR
...four, nine, zero, nine- the one with the stick going down, Salim- six- stick going up-

Latika's head appears from around the corner. She hisses. But they don't hear. Hisses again. Then she is running for her life past the pair of them.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Six, one, shit, let's go-

Salim collapses off Amir's shoulders and all three run off down an alley past a dozen of the gang's sprayed-on adverts all reading: "Beanbags- 22 4909661". A fat Security Guard with a long stick huffs round the corner.

SECURITY GUARD
Got you now, little fuckers.

They gaze desperately around the cul-de-sac. Trapped. But there is a way up the wall via some drain pipes. Salim and Amir scramble up the pipes. Latika follows but is pulled back down by the guard. Amir is balanced on the top of the wall, Salim already safe on the other side.

SALIM
Come on! Let's go!

CONTINUED:

Amir looks down. Latika has curled up into a foetal position, a tiny ball at the feet of the Security Guard, staring up at him, just waiting to be beaten. The Guard lifts the stick over his head.

SECURITY GUARD
First, the stick, little rabbit. Then we have some fun.

SALIM
Amir! Come on!

Amir considers safety one side, a beating on the other, then jumps onto the head of the Security Guard. They both topple into the dirt.

AMIR
Go!

Latika scrambles up the drainpipes as Amir dodges around the Guard-

AMIR (CONT'D)
Hey, fart-bag! Wheel your fat belly over here, why don't you? Come on, if you dare. I'll take you, I'll take you...

Amir briefly and ridiculously squares up does a few mock karate chops and then scarpers, getting a few, painful strikes as he goes.

EXT. WASTE GROUND. DAWN.

Beneath giant advertising hoardings the size of a tower block, the three children sit around an open fire cooking rice in a battered pot. Their shelter is made of a couple of sheets of plastic held up with sticks. Amir is lying, wincing in pain as Salim examines the purple weals on his back and the top of his legs. Latika stands at a distance, watching.

SALIM
Hissing. What kind of a bloody look-out is that? Hissing. Know what? She can talk if she wants to. Can't you?

He marches up to her, grabs her by the hair and drags her towards Amir.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Can't you?

CONTINUED:

He tugs her head back painfully. Her mouth opens in protest, but no sound comes out.

SALIM (CONT'D)
I've heard you. At night. I've heard you.

AMIR
Leave her. Those are bad dreams, That's different.

SALIM
What does she do, the fucking hissing lookout? Huh? What good is she? Apart from eating our food. You can that alright, eh?

Latika struggles free and stalks off. They watch her begin to climb the scaffolding that supports the tower-block-sized advertising hoardings.

EXT. WASTE GROUND. DAY.

Amir and Salim lie in the baking midday heat under their make-shift camp. Amir shields his eyes, tries to see Latika, high up the scaffolding.

AMIR
What's she doing up there?

SALIM
Getting ready to jump, I hope.

Salim closes his eyes. Amir quietly gets to his feet and painfully makes his way to the scaffolding. He starts up it.

EXT. SCAFFOLDING. DUSK.

Amir and Latika sit on a platform a hundred feet in the air, their feet dangling in space. The tiny dot below them is Salim, moving around the fire.

AMIR
He's alright, really. He just wants to be in charge. You just have to pretend that he is, then he's fine.

They stare down at him. Then, Latika touches Amir's leg, looks at the weal from the Security Guard's stick.

CONTINUED:

AMIR (CONT'D)
It's okay.

Latika strokes Amir's leg. He doesn't really know how to react to this. Starts gabbling.

AMIR (CONT'D)
The thing I don't understand is why? I mean, beanbags. Bags of beans. Why do they need to phone up? They can get them in the market, can't they? Maybe they're special bags of beans or- aré, stop it, yaar!

They roll around on the platform, Amir giggling.

EXT. WASTE GROUND. DUSK.

Salim prods the fire with a stick. He stares up at the scaffolding, trying to see the two tiny figures. Hears the laughter. Flings the stick into the darkness.

EXT. SCAFFOLDING. DUSK.

Amir rolls on top of Latika. Pins her down, laughing. A small croak suddenly comes from her. Amir stops.

AMIR
Yes? You're speaking! What is it?

She tries again. With difficulty a word comes out.

LATIKA
La-

AMIR
La?

LATIKA
Latika.

AMIR
Latika? Your name's Latika?

She nods.

AMIR (CONT'D)
I'm Amir. Aaamiiiir.

He enunciates with extraordinary clarity. Latika forces another word out.

CONTINUED:

LATIKA
I- I-

AMIR
Yes?

LATIKA
I know that, tosser.

Shocked silence. Then, Amir laughs. A strange noise comes from Latika's throat and they are both laughing and rolling around on the deck, mock-fighting. Exhausted, Latika stops.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
Come.

AMIR
What?

She indicates the mammoth hoarding behind them and pulls two spray cans from her torn shorts. Amir gets it.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Maximum bonus!

Scrambles to his feet.

EXT. SCAFFOLDING. DAWN.

The sun catches the tops of the skyscrapers. Mumbai becomes bathed in dusty yellow. For once, the city looks genuinely beautiful.

The sun hits the aerial hoarding and two tiny, sleeping figures, arms entwined, are lit below the huge, sprawling graffiti that advertises in thirty-foot letters, beanbags to the whole city.

INSPECTOR V/O
So you got your bonus, huh? Money *and* the woman.

AMIR V/O
Oh, yes. Maximum bonus, alright.

EXT. MUMBAI. DAY.

A convoy of official-looking vehicles pulls up on the road by the waste ground. Amir gets up from under his shelter, peers at the distant vans.

CONTINUED:

AMIR
What did I tell you? Greetings, sirs! Over here! Admire our handiwork! We are your number one tag-team, sirs. Ek dum first class.

SALIM
(dubious)
Sure that's the bean bag people?

AMIR
Yep, that's the phone number on the side.

The doors to the van open and a number of extremely annoyed-looking men in overalls get out. Underneath the phone *number* are the words "Bombay City Water Corporation".

AMIR (CONT'D)
(reading)
Bombay City Water Corporation....

Amir scrambles around in the pocket of his shorts. Checks the scrap of paper with the beanbag number on it. The terrible penny drops.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Oh. That's a seven?

SALIM
Amir, bhen chod....

But by this time the men are upon them, lathis at the held aloft.

BOMBAY WATER EMPLOYEE
A thousand bloody calls I've had this morning only! For bloody bean bags!

AMIR
Gracious Sirs, I humbly apologise- a reduction on our finest bag of beans, Sir?

But the sticks come down. Salim, Amir and Latika dance around attempting to avoid the lathis.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Free delivery, Sirs! Free delivery!

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

On the video, the lights dim, the music swells....

PREM
For twenty-five thousand rupees...the bhajan Chalo Ri Murali was written by which famous Indian poet. Was it A) Surdas. B) Tulsidas. C) Mira Bai. D) Kabir. How are you on the poets, Amir?

We pull back to reveal the whole of the Inspector's office.

INSPECTOR
Yes, slum dog. How are you on the poets?

EXT. GORAI BEACH DUMPING GROUND. DAY.

Blazing sun. Diggers and trucks are shifting mounds of rubble on a rubbish dump that seems to stretch for ever. Oblivious to the dust kicked up by the trucks, Latika is picking up old plastic bags, examining each one and putting the less worn in a big sack. The beginning of a truly beautiful woman is there under the dirt and exhaustion. She stoops to dig another bag out of the dirt, but stops and stares.

INT. 'TENT'. DAY.

Under sheets of plastic propped up on sticks, Amir and Salim are sleeping out the hottest part of the day. Amir wakes to see a figure standing over him- a silhouette with a halo of sun behind him. Out of his bag, the man produces a bottle of *Thumbs Up*. He uncaps it with an alluring hiss. It is almost an advert for thirst-quenching affluence. Almost instinctively, Salim and Amir stir.

MAN
Hello.

He hands the bottle to Salim, gets another from his bag and waves it questioningly at Amir.

MAN (CONT'D)
Hot, huh? My name is Maman.

EXT. ORPHANAGE. EVENING.

The hills on the edge of Bombay. Greenery and space, for the first time in the film. A smart, black Ambassador pulls up outside a building. Maman gets out. More slowly, Amir, Salim and Latika get out. They stare at their new surroundings uncertainly.

MAMAN
Anyone hungry? Come on in.

INT. ORPHANAGE COURTYARD. DAY.

Twenty children are eating at long benches in a ramshackle courtyard. Maman, ushers Amir, Salim and Latika in and sits them down at one of the benches. He waves a hand and a giant man, Punnoose, comes over with a big bowl of food. The three tear into it. Cleaning every last morsel of rice from his plate, Amir looks up and notices a table peopled entirely with blind or crippled children. Some of the legless are eating on the floor next to the table. Amir leans over to Salim.

AMIR
He must be a very good man to look after these people.

SALIM
(glancing at them)
A saint.

Arvind, a boy smaller than either Amir or Salim overhears.

ARVIND
We're not allowed to talk to them.

LATIKA
Why not?

Arvind shrugs. Latika licks her plate, glances at Maman who is looking right at them.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
Well, if there are seconds, Maman is definitely a Saint.

As if telepathic, Maman signals to Punnoose and he brings a large bowl of rice and dhal over to them. Latika looks at Amir and Salim. They burst out laughing.

CONTINUED:

LATIKA (CONT'D)
I tell you, Lord Siva is with us.

INT. ORPHANAGE. DAY.

Salim, Latika, Amir and a group of children are standing in a line singing a doha- ancient lyrics set to music. A teacher is leading the singing while Maman walks up and down the line listening to each one individually. He stops at one small boy, Arvind, and listens. Nods his head to the Teacher. He continues down the line until he stops in front of Amir, and listens. Holds up his hand.

TEACHER
Stop! Quiet!

MAMAN
You. Again.

Amir starts singing again. He has the sweetest of voices. Untrained but pure. Mamam looks at the Teacher. The Teacher nods. Maman smiles, ruffles Amir's hair, moves on. He stops at Salim whose octave-slipping singing is lusty and appallingly out of tune. Maman winces and moves on. The boy next to Salim giggles. Immediately, Salim is on him. Before a fight breaks out, Punnoose pulls Salim off the boy and hurls him across the room. Salim gets up and charges at Punnoose. For a second, Punnoose is back-footed, but then pins Salim's arms to his side. Maman laughs. Approaches Salim.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
You sing like one, and you fight like one. I think you've found your dog, Punnoose.

EXT. CENTRAL MUMBAI TRAFFIC. DAY.

A group of children are sitting in the jumble of concrete under a motorway flyover. Cars surround them, bumper to bumper. Latika and Amir are playing an improvised hopscotch on concrete slabs. They are giggling, bumping into each other, tickling, laughing. Salim and Punnoose are sitting together, smoking. Salim is staring hard at Amir and Latika until Punnoose grunts, a sign for Salim to clap his hands.

SALIM
Okay, let's go, let's go! It's not a fucking holiday!

CONTINUED:

The children get to their feet. Latika sighs, puts a patch over her eye and grabs a pair of crutches. Suddenly, the lame beggar. Salim goes over to one of the girls, who is carrying a sleeping baby. Puts out his hand.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Give me that.

The girl shakes her head. Salim grabs her by the hair in one hand and takes the baby with the other. He shoves her to the ground. The other children stare.

AMIR
Hey, Salim!

He challenges Amir.

SALIM
What, choté bhai? You got a problem?

He laughs and walks over to Latika.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Here. For you.

LATIKA
I don't want it.

SALIM
You'll earn double. I'm doing you a favour, Latika.

AMIR
She doesn't want it.

SALIM
Chup, Amir.

Latika turns away and begins to walk towards the cars.

SALIM (CONT'D)
I'll drop it.

He holds the baby up. Latika grabs the baby with a cry just as Salim releases it from his hands. Salim pinches the baby.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Triple if it's crying.

Latika snatches it away. Salim laughs, goes back to sitting with Punnoose.

CONTINUED: (2)

The children scatter to the cars trapped at the lights, tapping plaintively on the windows and making the universal begging gesture.

INT. ORPHANAGE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Surrounded by beer bottles, Punnoose is slumped asleep by the kitchen door. Latika edges past, avoids the cook sleeping under the table and goes to a shelf laden with vegetables. She pulls down a bunch of chillies still on the vine, strips a few off and tip-toes out with them.

INT. ORPHANAGE. DORMITORY. NIGHT.

Sleeping children, three or four to a mattress on the floor. Latika tip-toes around the mattresses. She pauses over one in particular where we see Salim, asleep. She carefully pulls up the sheet, delves underneath. Pleasant dreams cross Salim's sleeping face for a second. Then suddenly, he is bolt upright and screaming. He charges around the room clutching his genitals in agony.

SALIM
Madher chod...!

He sprints out of the room, wailing.

INT. ORPHANAGE. SHOWERS. NIGHT.

The lights are on and two dozen children are screaming with laughter as Salim stands under the make-shift shower directing the water down his pants to his burning genitals, his face a picture of agony. Latika wipes crushed chillies from her hands.

SALIM
You're dead, sala.

She smiles and walks past Amir with a shrug. Then Punnoose comes stalking in and the children scatter away.

PUNNOOSE
Get back to bed, dogs! What the hell...

AMIR V/O
They taught me every doha, bhajan, raga and dhun in the history of Indian music.

CONTINUED:

INSPECTOR V/O
And why would they do that, I wonder?

EXT. ORPHANAGE. NIGHT.

Sunset glows on hillsides outside Mumbai. Outside the orphanage, a stereo is blaring out Hindi film tunes. A bottle of local hooch is being passed around the children who surround a table on which Salim is singing and dancing really badly. Amir and Latika start up howling like dogs. The rest of the children take up the cry. Salim stops, jumps down and switches off the stereo.

SALIM
You fuckers just wait. I will be the next Amitabh, Gunfighter Number One, Salman Khan dancing sensation. I'll be living in Bandra Bandstand-

AMIR
- under the bandstand.

SALIM
In the biggest house in the road. You'll see who's laughing when you come begging at my gate, sala.

Derisory laughter. He grabs the bottle and sinks some large gulps. Punnoose arrives, grabs the bottle from Salim, whacks him around the head and says something under his breath.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Arvind, bhen chod.

Arvind, Salim and Punnoose head down a path next to the Orphanage.

INT. SHACK. NIGHT.

In a shack, Arvind is singing one of Surdas' bhajans in front of Maman and an old man who by his ragged appearance must be a villager. Punnoose and Salim sit behind Arvind.

MAMAN
Very good, very good. I am pleased, Arvind. He is ready.

CONTINUED:

ARVIND
Ready?

Maman nods to Punnoose. Before Arvind can turn round, Punnoose has covered his mouth with a cloth and after the briefest of struggles, Arvind's body goes limp. The villager puts an old tin box on the table. Taking the lid from the tin, he brings out a cloth and unwraps it. Inside is a spoon. He checks the edge with his thumb. Sharp. Douses it with whisky and passes it over a candle flame. The spoon ignites with blue flame for a moment. The villager wipes it with the cloth nods to Punnoose.

PUNNOOSE
Salim!

Utterly bemused, Salim nevertheless helps Punnoose lay Arvind on the table. The villager takes hold of Arvind's eyelid and pulls it open. He brings the spoon close. Suddenly, Salim is being sick in the corner of the shack. By the time he has turned back, the villager is wiping the spoon on a blood-soaked rag.

MAMAN
Okay. Now the other one. Salim, go get Amir.

A frozen moment.

SALIM
What?

MAMAN
Gunfighter Number One, isn't that right, Salim? The money, the women, the cars...you want them bad, huh? And why not?

Maman gets out of his chair. Approaches Salim.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
The time has come to choose, yaar. The life of a slum dog or the life of a man. A real man. A gunfighter, Salim.

Maman holds Salim's head in his hands.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
Your destiny is in your hands, bhai. You can be me. Or nobody. Understand?

CONTINUED: (2)

SALIM
Yes, Maman.

Maman nods.

MAMAN
So, brother, go get Amir.

Salim is frozen for another few seconds, then turns and walks out of the door. Maman waits, then nods to Punnoose who slips out after him.

EXT. HILL VILLAGE. NIGHT.

Salim walks up to the path towards the clearing where Amir is on the table, filmi dancing.

SALIM
Amir?

AMIR
There's no Amir, here. If you're looking for Amitabh Bacchan Junior, dancing sensation...you can wait.

Salim stares at his brother, dancing delightedly. Finally.

SALIM
Amir. Maman wants you to sing.

Amir sighs and gets down.

AMIR
My filmi career...ruined.

EXT. PATH. NIGHT.

Amir is still humming along cheerfully to his song as they walk down the path.

SALIM
(conversationally)
Athos.

Amir is suddenly alert. Slows

AMIR
Porthos?

Salim nods. Big smile. Puts a hand on Amir's shoulder.

CONTINUED:

SALIM
When I say.

PUNNOOOSE
(glancing back)
Come on.

INT. SHACK. NIGHT.

Salim guides Amir into the shack where Maman, the Villager and Punnoose are waiting. Maman smiles.

MAMAN
Amir, hello. You have done well. It's time for you to- turn professional.

AMIR
Really?

MAMAN
Sing me a song, yaar. Sing me a song.

Amir opens his mouth, then closes it again. Holds out his hand.

AMIR
Fifty rupees.

MAMAN
What?

AMIR
(shrugs)
I've turned professional. What can I do?

Maman laughs.

MAMAN
Sala...!

He throws some notes at him and Amir begins to sing. Maman waits a while, then nods to Punnoose. Behind Amir, Punnoose hands Salim the bottle of chloroform and the rag. Salim approaches the back of Amir. Salim waits until he has finished the song. Raises his hand with the rag in it. Maman smiles, nods. Salim flings the contents of the bottle in Punnoose's face. Punnoose screams and stumbles back clutching his eyes, knocking over the table.

CONTINUED:

SALIM
Go!

Salim and Amir scramble for the door. The knocked-over candle catches the spilled chloroform and a curtain which whooshes up in flame.

AMIR O.S.
Latika!

EXT. HILLSIDE. NIGHT.

Heavy, desperate breathing. Feet stumble on roots. Fall into holes. The three children are running. Branches smack into their faces. But they are so scared, nothing will stop them. Behind them, torches scour the undergrowth. Men shouting. They break out of the woods and are confronted with a train goods yard.

EXT. GOODS YARD. NIGHT.

They run over the tracks, between the trains, but the shouts are getting louder, the torches closer. A diesel engine is moving out of the station. Amir, Latika and Salim sprint for the Guard's Van at the very back of the moving train. Punnoose is closest to them. Salim is fastest and first to jump the train. He holds out his hand. Amir grabs it and is hauled in. Amir holds his hand out to Latika.

AMIR
Come on! Faster!

She reaches out to him. Their hands almost touch.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Take it! Take it! I can't reach...

Salim barges Amir out of the way. Amir stumbles back as Salim reaches his hand out to Latika, so he doesn't see Latika's hand grasp Salim's, nor see their eyes lock onto each other, nor see Salim very deliberately let go of her hand. Latika stumbles.

LATIKA
Amir!

AMIR
Latika!

CONTINUED:

Amir scrambles to the rail again, is about to jump, but Salim pulls him back, stuffs the chloroformed rag into his face. Muffled screams, struggling, then his body goes limp. The train gains more speed and pulls impassively away. Latika stumbles again and stops running. Salim watches as Punnoose catches up with her and stops running. He smashes Latika to the ground.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
The question was, for twenty-five thousand rupees: who wrote the famous bhajan Chalo Ri Murali. You, Amir Malik, Assistant Porter from Juhu, chose to play. Your answer?

AMIR
Surdas.

PREM
Sure?

AMIR
Very sure.

PREM
Apka final jawab?

AMIR
Yes.

PREM
Computer-ji, A lock kiya-jaye.

The lights dim, the music swells. Prem presses a button on his computer: looks him straight in the eyes for an age.

PREM (CONT'D)
(simply)
Guess what? You're right.

Applause, music, lights.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Inspector is eying Amir, weighing it all up.

CONTINUED:

AMIR
(shrugging)
Blind singers earn double. You know that.

INSPECTOR
And what happened to the girl? They blinded her too?

AMIR
(shakes his head)
They had other plans. Though it took me a long, long time to find out.

EXT. TRAIN. MORNING.

Salim and Amir are sitting on top of the train. Amir is staring blankly down the track.

SALIM
Do I have to tell you a hundred times, chutiya? She tripped. What could I do? Aré, come on.

Amir wipes the tears from his eyes furiously.

AMIR
We have to go back. We can't just leave her.

SALIM
He'll kill us if we go back. He was going to take your eyes out for God's sake. With a bloody spoon! She'll be alright. She always is.

Salim gets up and starts walking unsteadily along the roof of the train carriage.

AMIR
Where you going?

SALIM
First class, bhai. Where else?

INT/ EXT. FIRST CLASS CARRIAGE. MORNING.

The ancient train is huffing slowly up an incline. A middle class Indian couple with their three children are sitting at a table, their breakfast spread before them.

CONTINUED:

Into this domestic scene, unseen by them comes Amir. Upside down and still outside the train, he is clearly being dangled by his ankles from the train roof. He gives a few, silent directional signs to Salim who manoeuvres him across, dips his hand into the open window, snatches a chapatti and signals franticly to be hoisted up. The family continue to eat, unperturbed.

Then Amir appears again. This time one of the children spots him. Despite Amir giving her a friendly wave, she yelps. The father of the group grabs Amir's hand which has just snatched a samosa. There is a tussle, Salim holding onto Amir's legs, the father holding onto Amir's arms and Amir in the middle, shouting. Salim is losing the battle and his footing. He stumbles and the pair of them fall from the train, rolling and tumbling down an embankment in slow-motion. Interspersed with the seemingly endless tumble are images of Amir and Salim on top of different trains-

- huddled together against the freezing rain...

- surfing the wind at the front of the train...

- admiring the distant Himalaya....

AMIR V/O
We criss-crossed the country from Rajasthan to Calcutta always thrown off, always getting back on. This was our home. A home with wheels and a whistle.

The final tumble as they crash onto flat ground.

EXT. RAILWAY EMBANKMENT. DAY.

Groggily, Amir sits up and groans. Somehow in the tumble, he has been transformed into a fourteen year-old. And Salim a strong sixteen year-old. Through the haze of pain and dust, Amir sees something glinting in the distance- something impossibly beautiful.

AMIR
Is this heaven?

SALIM
You're not dead, chutiya.

Amir clears his head. Sees Salim picking himself up from the ground. But the apparition is still there.

AMIR
So what's that?

CONTINUED:

SALIM
Wow.

They stare at the apparition. The unmistakable outline of the Taj Mahal rises from the horizon, pink in the morning sun. Nothing could be more beautiful.

AMIR
Must be a hotel.

EXT. TAJ MAHAL. DAY.

Amir and Salim wander under the great dome of the Taj Mahal. Two tiny slum kids dwarfed by this massive monument to love. It is a moment of genuine wonderment for them. Then a tour guide bustles nearby, tourists flowing behind him.

GUIDE
...there are five main elements to the Taj. The Darwaza, the main gateway, the Bageecha or garden, the Masjid or mosque, the Naqqar Khana, the rest house and the Rauza or mausoleum. If you would like to follow me, I will show you the ninety-nine names of Allah on Mumtaz's tomb. As before, please remove your shoes.

The Guide heads into the mausoleum followed by the crowd of tourists. Bored, Salim makes a face at the Guide, while Amir slips in at the back of the group and follows. Salim spots the rows and rows of shoes left outside the mausoleum. Looks around. Takes off his flip-flops, and stacks them neatly in line. Puts his feet next to a nice pair of mocassins, finds them the wrong size and moves on to the next pair. He looks around, is about to put his feet into them when a large street kid looms up behind him.

SHANKAR
Take those shoes and I'll kill you.

SALIM
Sorry, they look just like mine-

He turns round and sees the source of the voice. Sizes him up.

SALIM (CONT'D)
- oh, and they're yours, are they?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHANKAR
I'm looking after them.

He makes the universal baksheesh sign with his hands. Salim immediately spots a fellow traveller.

SALIM
Ahh. What if they don't pay?

SHANKAR
Godbole's Uncle has a shoe shop in Delhi.

SALIM
First class. What about the cops?

SHANKAR
Every now and then we have to catch somebody and turn them in. Or at least pretend to.

SALIM
Right.

Salim processes this information. Sees an opening.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Do you-?

SHANKAR
You wouldn't mind? We haven't had a chase for a while now.

SALIM
Kid, you couldn't catch me if you tried.

He snatches up the shoes he was trying on and races across the marble floor of the Taj.

SHANKAR
Hey! Stop thief! Stop thief!

The cry is taken up by the other street kids who all hare after him screaming theatrically.

EXT. TAJ MAHAL. MAUSOLEUM. DAY.

Amir comes out of the mausoleum into the bright sunlight and looks around for Salim. No sign of him. Amir happens to be standing right next to the booth advertising guided tours when a German couple approach.

CONTINUED:

ADA
Please, what time is the next tour?

AMIR
Err-

PETER
- so much waiting around in this damned country.

AMIR
No, I-

ADA
- we're on a very tight schedule, you see, young man. Have to see the Red Fort this afternoon. Would it be possible to show us around now? Obviously we understand it would cost more for just the two of us...

Peter waves a couple of thousand rupee notes at Amir. His eyes widen.

AMIR
But of course, Madam. Please follow me.

Amir stalks off. The Germans follow. Amir stops before the monument. Points a confident arm at it.

AMIR (CONT'D)
This is....the Taj Mahal

A terrible pause as Peter and Ada stare at him. Clearly more is expected. He moves off at a pace.

AMIR (CONT'D)
The Taj Mahal was built by the Emperor Khurram for his wife Mumtaz who was maximum beautiful woman in the whole world. When she died, the Emperor decided to build this five star hotel for everyone who wanted to visit her tomb...but he died in- in fifteen eighty-seven, before any of the rooms were built. Or the lifts. The swimming pool, however, as you can see was completed on schedule in top class fashion.

CONTINUED: (2)

He waves confidently in the direction of the fountains.

ADA
It says nothing of this in the guide book.

AMIR
With respect, Madam, the guide book is written by a bunch of lazy, Indian, good-for-nothing beggars.

ADA
Oh.

AMIR
And this, Lady and Gentleman, is burial place of Mumtaz.

ADA
How did she die?

AMIR
A road traffic accident.

ADA
Really?

AMIR
Maximum pile-up.

PETER
(suspicious)
I thought she died in child-birth.

AMIR
(nodding sagely)
Exactly, Sir. She was on the way to the hospital when it happened.

Amir moves on. Ada and Peter exchange a glance.

ADA
(shrugging)
You've seen the way they drive around here...

EXT. TAJ MAHAL. DAY.

Montage of Amir authoritatively showing tourists around the Taj Mahal: abandoning a group with a polite bow before charging for safety as two Police Officers race towards him: handing over a wad of rupees to Salim who counts the money.

CUT TO:

EXT. TAJ MAHAL. DAY.

Amir stands a Tourist on a wall and positions his hands to create the optical illusion that he is dangling the Taj from his fingers. Takes a photo for the Tourist. Behind the Tourist, Salim picks up the Tourist's shoes and sprints away across the grass.

CUT TO:

EXT. YAMUNA RIVER DHOBI GHAT. DAY.

Hectares of drying clothes by the side of the river. Spectacular squares of red, saffron, white. Not far away from the dhobi ghat, there is a makeshift slum-camp where Salim, Shankar and his gang are sitting, smoking. Amir joins them, hands over a wad of rupees to Salim. Salim counts the cash, hands half to Shankar and slaps Amir so hard on the back that he nearly falls over.

EXT. SLUM. DAY.

A pair of elaborate high-heeled shoes get out of a new Mercedes. They belong to Amir. The Indian driver and a middle-aged American couple also get out. Amir points them down a lane which opens out on India's largest dhobi where hundreds of women are beating clothes on stone slabs.

AMIR
This is the biggest dhobi ghat in the whole of India, Mister David. They say that every man in Uttar Pradesh is wearing a kurta that has been washed here at least one time.

CLARK
Is that so? That's amazing. Let's get a look at this, Adele.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gets out his video camera and wanders towards the dhobi ghat. Behind them a motor rickshaw pulls up. Salim, Shankar and a couple of the street kids from the Taj leap out. Within seconds, the Mercedes is up on bricks and the wheels are being removed. Salim takes a hacksaw to the Mercedes badge on the bonnet, whilst urging the others on.

SALIM
Aré, sala! Formula One, Formula One! Pit-stop ka speed, Schumacher ka ishtyle

The crowds in the lane barely notice as the car is stripped of all its parts.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Go, go!

A shout from the top of the lane and the boys scatter, bouncing the four wheels at speed down the lane. Amir, the Indian driver and the two Americans return. They stop in front of the denuded car.

CLARK
Woah. What happened here?

Suddenly the Indian driver is slapping Amir ferociously around the head with one of his shoes.

DRIVER
I give you two tight slaps, mader chod!

AMIR
I don't know! I didn't do it, did I...? Nothing to do with me...get off!

But the beating continues, the driver kicking Amir down onto the floor. The two Americans stare, uncertain what to do.

ADELE
Do something, Clark.

CLARK
Well, I- I dunno, I-

Finally Clark intervenes, pulling the driver off Amir.

CONTINUED: (2)

CLARK (CONT'D)
Okay, okay, just cool it. You're insured, aren't you? Jesus Christ...

Amir sits up. He is bleeding from his nose and mouth.

CLARK (CONT'D)
You okay?

AMIR
You wanted to see the 'real India', Mister David. Here it is.

EXT. YAMUNA RIVER. NIGHT.

A battered Amir limps along the river bank towards the Taj. He stops, bathes his swollen face in the river. Then looks up. Strange lights appear to emanate from the base of the monument. And then strange sounds.

EXT. TAJ MAHAL. NIGHT.

Amir climbs a crumbling wall and is confronted with an opera taking place right under the dome. Gluck's Orfeo ed Euridice. Hundreds of India's smartest professionals are watching from banked seating on a scaffolding frame.

EXT. STANDS. NIGHT.

Amir and a couple of street kids slip under the scaffolding supporting the banked seats. The street kids are trying to reach the hand-bags of the women above them.

BOY
(hissing)
Oi, Amir! There's a woman with no panties on over here.

Amir reaches up and easily lifts a wallet from a man's trouser pocket. On stage, the actors start singing. Amir seems to have forgotten the wallet and stares, mesmerised, at the stage.

WOMAN
Why don't you put it back and listen to the music?

CONTINUED:

Amir starts, makes to run, but the woman who spoke holds out a cigarette. A Canadian back-packer is sitting, staring at the singers.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
It's called Orfeo. Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus- that one there- is looking for his lover, Eurydice. She died, but he can't live without her.

She hands him a cigarette. He puts the wallet back. She smiles at him and they both turn to the stage.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
The pain is so bad that he goes to the underworld- the place we go when we die- to try to get her back.

AMIR
You can't do that. Can you?

WOMAN
You can in opera.

AMIR
Does he find her?

WOMAN
Watch and see.

Amir watches as the final aria is sung; one of the most beautiful pieces of music a human is likely to hear. Applause breaks out from above them. Tears are running down Amir's cheeks.

EXT. YAMUNA RIVER. NIGHT.

Salim, Shankar, Amir and the Taj Gang are gathered around a campfire. All of them wear extraordinary foot-wear of one form or another, from elaborate high heels to walking boots five sizes too large. A home-made hooka pipe is being passed around the fire. The eyes of the children have long since stopped focussing. Salim is sporting a Mercedes Benz badge on a chain around his neck. Amir wanders into the circle, his face bloody and swollen.

AMIR
I knew it was you.

CONTINUED:

SALIM
Hey, I didn't know they'd do that to you. Sorry, man. Have a whisky.

AMIR
We have to go, Salim.

SALIM
Go? Go where?

AMIR
Bombay. I have to find her. Latika

SALIM
Bombay? Don't be stupid. We're making good money here. Best money of our lives.

AMIR
I don't care. I'm going. We should have *gone* a long time ago.

Salim turns to Shankar.

SALIM
Baby brother's in love. With a flat-chested hijra.

AMIR
She was one of us. A musketeer.

SALIM
A musketeer...Grow up, Amir. Look, I'm sorry, okay? How was I to know they'd beat you up. Here, you can have some of the cash. Come on...

AMIR
I've got cash.

He rips out a wad of dollar bills from his pocket.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Americans.

SALIM
Give that here. I look after the money.

Salim holds out his hand.

AMIR
Come to Bombay and you can have it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Salim stares at Amir for a moment, sees the seriousness of purpose and drops his hand.

SALIM
I've given up everything for you once. And you want it again, sala? No. Fuck off to Bombay. Who needs you, anyway?

He rips the Guide pass from Amir's neck.

SALIM (CONT'D)
I can be a bloody tour guide. It's easy. Right?

Salim appeals to the stoned group. Silence.

SHANKAR
Maybe stick to nicking shoes and car wheels, Salim.

SALIM
Mader chod.

AMIR
I'm going, Salim. Whatever you say, I'm going.

Salim pushes Amir backwards. Amir falls heavily to the floor. Salim stands over him.

SALIM
Go, then.

He kicks Amir.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Think I care?

Amir gets up begins to walk away. Salim roars with rage. But Amir continues to walk.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Wait!

Amir stops.

SALIM (CONT'D)
You won't last two minutes in Bombay without me, you little fucker.

He throws the Guide's badge on the fire and stomps off into the darkness after Amir.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

Prem leans back in his chair.

PREM
So, my friend: ready for another question.

AMIR
Yes.

Prem presses his computer. The lights dim again, the music comes up.

PREM
For fifty thousand rupees, Ladies and Gentlemen...On an American One Hundred Dollar Bill there is a portrait of which American statesman? Is it A), George Washington, B) Franklin Roosevelt, C) Benjamin Franklin, D) Abraham Lincoln?

Silence from Amir.

PREM (CONT'D)
Pay or play, Amir? The cheque for twenty-five thousand rupees is yours. All you have to do is stop now and walk away. But get the answer right and you have fifty thousand rupees...and of course, are one vital step closer to a million. So. You decide. Pay or play?

INT. GALLERY. DAY

DIRECTOR
Okay, he hasn't got a clue. This is going to be a walk-away. Stand by.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

A gasp from the audience. Prem whistles.

PREM
Get a lot of hundred dollar bills in your line of work, Amir?

CONTINUED:

AMIR
The minimum tip for my services.

Laughter from the audience.

PREM
I don't know what you're doing on the show- you'll be a crorepati just from carrying the bags!

AMIR
It's C. Benjamin Franklin.

PREM
Woah! We haven't locked the computer, man. You're going to play?

AMIR
I think I just have. Haven't I?

PREM
You certainly have. C. Right?

AMIR
Right. C.

PREM
Slow down. Not confusing your Franklins? Benjamin for Roosevelt?

AMIR
I've never heard of Roosevelt Franklin.

PREM
You've never heard of Roosevelt Franklin...I can't bear to look.

He gives this one to the audience who titter on cue. Amir looks confused.

PREM (CONT'D)
No, no. Don't you worry, Amir. For fifty thousand rupees: you were asked which statesman's portrait is depicted on a hundred dollar bill. You said C. Benjamin Franklin. Ladies and Gentlemen...

He presses the computer, pretends to ruminate for a while with his finger pressed to his lips.

CONTINUED: (2)

PREM (CONT'D)
Amir Malik- you chose to play not pay. I'm afraid you no longer have twenty-five thousand rupees....

Prem leans over and tears up the cheque. There is a sigh of disappointment from the audience, a look of confusion on Amir's face.

PREM (CONT'D)
...you in fact have fifty thousand rupees!

Wild applause from the audience. Amir allows himself a genuine smile.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Inspector pulls out a note from his wallet. Glances at it.

INSPECTOR
Who's on the thousand rupees note?

AMIR
I don't know.

He waves the note at him.

INSPECTOR
It's Gandhi!

AMIR
I've heard of him.

The Inspector kicks his chair.

INSPECTOR
Don't get clever or the electricity'll be out again.

AMIR
They didn't me that question. I don't know why. Ask them.

The Inspector stares hard at Amir. Then, Sergeant Srinivas stomps back into the office, sweat pouring from him.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Platform Seventeen-

Has to consult his notebook.

CONTINUED:

SERGEANT SRINIVAS (CONT'D)
A statue of Frederick Stevens, architect and builder of Victoria Terminus in -

INSPECTOR OF POLICE
- yes, yes, Srinivas. The hundred dollar bill.

EXT. BOMBAY. DAY.

From a thousand feet in the sky, looking down on the limitless megatropolis of Mumbai. Half-built sky-scrapers, slums, factories, roads, trains.

AMIR V/O
Bombay had turned into Mumbai.

We descend, down until the lines of ants become people.

AMIR V/O (CONT'D)
The orphanage had gone, the slum had gone, the people.... all gone. And everywhere was building, building, building.

Descending even further, we pick out a construction site and then Amir....

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE. DAY.

..who is staring through a wire fence at the construction site.

AMIR V/O
But I knew she was here. Somewhere she was here.

He turns away, then something catches his eye. Underneath all the scraps of flyers and posters on a broken wall is a corner of something that Amir recognises. He tears back a poster. Underneath, faded but recognisable is one of their beanbag graffiti advertisements.

EXT. SLUM. NIGHT.

Amir asks a group of stall-holders on the slum main street. They shrug, aren't interested. The camera pulls up and up until Amir is nothing but a dot wandering the maze of lanes, railways and highways, one among endless millions of people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMIR V/O
Evenings, I searched. Days, I worked.

EXT. HOTEL. NIGHT.

Amir wanders up to the rickshaw drivers parked outside the hotel. He stops and asks a question. The drivers shake their heads. Amir continues up the steps towards a door, exhausted face and grubby clothes walking straight towards camera. He goes through the door and immediately....

INT. HOTEL. FOYER. DAY.

....is, without breaking step in a slightly grubby white uniform. He walks across the echoing, marble floor of a struggling four-star hotel, goes through double doors....

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. DAY.

...into a corridor that is devoid of carpet, paint- anything except a phone on the bare wall and a stool. The phone is ringing. Amir sits on the stool and answers the phone.

AMIR
Room service, good afternoon?... Yes, sir. Two chicken burgers, two fries, one cocoa-cola and one mango lassi and a large bottle of mineral water...Bisleri or Himalayan Spring, Sir?...Certainly, Sir. That will be with you in fifteen minutes, Sir. Thank you. Have a nice day.

He hangs up and goes through another set of doors...

INT. HOTEL KITCHENS. DAY.

...to a cramped kitchen with definite hygiene problems. The cooks are playing carom on the table while under it Salim is dozing.

AMIR
Two chicken burgers, coke, mango lassi and a bottle of Bisleri.

CONTINUED:

Dozily, Salim gets up and takes a look behind one of the fridges. He chases out a chicken with a desultory kick and sorts through some empty mineral water bottles until he finds a Bisleri bottle. Salim fills the bottle of mineral water from the tap and begins delicately re-sealing the tamper-proof lid with super-glue. Amir collects cutlery and starts laying out a tray.

AMIR (CONT'D)
I'm going to Chowpatti again, okay? Want to come?

SALIM
For God's sake. You got some disease? You force me back to this shit-hole, we leave our friends, a good life, loads of money- for this. Isn't that enough?

AMIR
We came back to find her.

SALIM
No, *you* did, Amir, not me. Me, I don't give a shit about her. Plenty of pussy in Bombay for Salim. Oh, yes, sir! You should come down the Cages on Saturday night instead of searching for your lost love.

AMIR
I'm going to Chowpatti.

SALIM
(impersonating Ram)
"I'm going to Chowpatti". There are nineteen million people in this city, Amir. Forget her. She's history.

AMIR V/O
But she wasn't.

EXT. BANDRA BANDSTAND. DAY.

Amir is dodging the traffic at a busy junction. He moves around the beggars who are working the cars. Then he hears singing. He looks around, suddenly panicked. It is a siren song drawing him across the road, not even noticing that he is narrowly run down by a couple of cars, to a traffic island underneath a flyover.

CONTINUED:

He turns a corner and there is the singer, leaning up against one of the struts of the flyover. Arvind. Older now, just like Amir, a fourteen year-old boy. But eyeless. Amir freezes. He approaches Arvind and waits until he has finished singing. Despite his eyeless sockets, Arvind appears to know somebody is there. He turns and bows low, putting his hands together.

ARVIND
Namaste, Sahib.

AMIR
You- you have a good voice.

ARVIND
Thank you, Sir, thank you. Any kindness you give will be repaid in heaven many times.

Amir gets a couple of notes out of his pocket and puts them into Arvind's outstretched hand. He feels the notes with his fingers.

ARVIND (CONT'D)
A fifty. And a hundred! Blessings upon you, Sahib.

AMIR
How do you know?

ARVIND
There are many ways of seeing.

Arvind puts his hands together and bows deep again. Then, Amir takes his shoe off and gets out a hundred dollar bill.

AMIR
Here.

Amir crouches down and puts the bill into Arvind's hand. His fingers feel it. He sniffs it.

ARVIND
Dollars. But how many?

AMIR
One hundred.

ARVIND
Now you are playing with me, Sahib.

AMIR
No. I swear.

CONTINUED: (2)

ARVIND
What is on it? The pictures. Tell me.

AMIR
A building. With a clock on it. Trees behind it.

ARVIND
The other side. Turn it over.

AMIR
A man-

ARVIND
- who?

AMIR
I don't know. It doesn't say his name. He is sort of bald, but has long hair on the sides.

ARVIND
(smiling)
Benjamin Franklin. My God, my God. Thank you, Sahib. You were generous the first time. But this...

He stops. Suspects.

ARVIND (CONT'D)
And without even a song?

A long pause. Arvind keeps hold of Amir's arm.

ARVIND (CONT'D)
So you are rich, now, are you, Amir? I am happy for you.

AMIR
No. Somebody gave it to me. I don't have any more money, Arvind-

ARVIND
- I don't want your money.

He holds out the money.

ARVIND (CONT'D)
What I want, you can't give me.

AMIR
I am so sorry, Arvind.

CONTINUED: (3)

ARVIND
You got away. I didn't. That is all. No, no tears. Tears just mock me all the more.

AMIR
Arvind, I am looking for-

ARVIND
- how's your voice, Amir?

AMIR
I don't know. I haven't sung since-since then. Arvind, I-

ARVIND
- and your eyes?

AMIR
My eyes? My eyes are fine.

ARVIND
Then stay away, chutiyé, and count your blessings every morning you open them and see the sun rising. You owe Maman. He doesn't forget.

AMIR
I owe Latika.

Arvind shakes his head angrily.

ARVIND
Mader chod, she is worth a lot of money. A thousand times more than you or me, man.

AMIR
Where is she, Arvind?

ARVIND
Forget her, Amir.

AMIR
Please. Is she alive? Arvind, is she alive?

ARVIND
Alive? Oh, she's alive alright. It's your life, Amir. Pila Street. They call her Cherry, now.

AMIR
Thank you.

CONTINUED: (4)

Amir heads off through the traffic. Arvind shouts after him.

ARVIND
I will sing at your funeral, yaar.

EXT. PILA STREET. NIGHT.

Dark, crowded streets. Gangs of women stand outside the doorways or lean out of upstairs windows. They are garishly-dressed prostitutes varying in age from 13 to 60. Men wander past, eying the possibilities, exchanging lewd comments with them. Among the hordes on the pavement are Amir and Salim. They pass doorway after doorway of narrow rooms where prostitutes wait for customers. Amir and Salim stop at each group of women, Amir clearly asking them something, as the women either shrug or offer them something lewd- judging by the laughter that follows. But one woman in a narrow doorway points down the street. Amir has to drag a reluctant Salim away from the group.

INT. BROTHEL. NIGHT.

They go into one of the tiny houses. Loud Filmi music comes from upstairs. They are confronted by a woman in her fifties watching tv. She is less than interested.

AMIR
I'm looking for Cherry.

WOMAN
No, kid. Not available. Plenty of others. Take a look.

She indicates curtained cubicles behind him.

AMIR
I'm Latika's brother.

The Woman looks at him properly for the first time.

WOMAN
She's still not on the menu. Choose someone else or piss off.

Amir pulls out some rupee notes.

AMIR
I just want two minutes to talk to her.

CONTINUED:

She takes the money, counts it.

WOMAN
Two minutes.

She nods upwards. Salim and Amir head up the dark, tiny staircase. The Woman picks up the phone on her desk.

INT. LANDING. NIGHT.

On the tiny landing, Salim and Amir pull back a curtain to reveal a humping couple. They move on, past more women lying on their beds or blankly having sex, not in the least perturbed to be interrupted. They reach the end of the landing. From the other side of the door comes the filmi music. Amir puts his eye to one of the gaps in the slatted door. Through it he can see glimpses of a girl dancing to the music. Latika; though not the rag-picker of before. Now fifteen, she is a beautiful young woman and dressed in a revealing, turquoise, silk sari.

SALIM
Is it her or not?

He shoves Amir out of the way and watches.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Shit, she's sexy, man....

Then the music stops, an effeminate man steps into the limited frame Salim can see and snaps a stick down hard on Latika's hand.

DANCE TEACHER
You're not making chapattis, you gawaar. Flow, flow! You entice with the hands, you promise, you draw them in. Again.

The man starts the music again and Latika's hand flow elegantly around her head.

DANCE TEACHER (CONT'D)
Stop, stop!

The stick is raised to hit her but Amir opens the door.

INT. BROTHEL. NIGHT.

AMIR
Latika!

CONTINUED:

The Dance Teacher turns.

DANCE TEACHER
What the hell do you want?

He switches off the music.

LATIKA
Amir! Salim...

AMIR
Come. Quick.

But Latika remains fixed.

DANCE TEACHER
You silly little boys. Get out now while you can.

AMIR
Come with us.

Latika runs to Amir. But she freezes as she looks at the doorway. Maman, Punnoose and the Woman from downstairs stand there. The skin around Punnoose's eye bears the blisters from the chloroform burn years ago.

MAMAN
Look who we have here, Punnoose. Hello again, Amir. Salim. Never forget a face. Especially one that I own.

PUNNOOSE
Shall I take them to the marshes?

MAMAN
Whatever you like. Have fun. Just make sure that you dispose of them properly afterwards. No traces, thank you.

He turns to Amir.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
You really thought you could just walk in and take my prize away? Have you any idea how much this little virgin is worth, bhen chod?

He fingers Latika's hair.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
Get them out of here.

CONTINUED: (2)

Punnoose and the Muscle walk towards Amir. Maman turns to the Dance Teacher as they grab his arms.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
Please continue, Master-ji.

The Dance Teacher puts the music back on.

SALIM
No.

Suddenly, Salim is holding a pistol.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Leave him. Get over there.

Punnoose and the Muscle slowly release Amir and join Maman.

MAMAN
Let's not be foolish, Salim.
Heavy, aren't they?

Salim straightens up his gun arm.

SALIM
Money.

MAMAN
You can have money. Here.

Maman gets out his wallet and throws all the money in it on the floor.

MAMAN (CONT'D)
Take it. Go. Disappear with your friend and we'll forget all about this. Okay?

Salim collects up the money.

SALIM
Maman never forgets. Isn't that right?

MAMAN
Oh, Maman can make an exception.

Salim walks over to the music, turns it up. Picks up a cushion from the bed and walks right up to Maman.

SALIM
Can't take that risk, Maman.
Sorry.

CONTINUED: (3)

He wraps the cushion around the gun and pulls the trigger. Or tries to. Nothing happens. There is a frozen moment as they watch him fail to shoot. Everybody watches with surreal interest as Salim fumbles with the pistol. Eventually he looks up, giggles stupidly.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Safety catch.

Shrugs apologetically and shoots. Nobody is more surprised than Maman who crumples onto the floor. Latika starts desperately gathering up the notes on the floor, grabs Maman's wallet. Amir just stands.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Come on.

They run out of the room and down the stairs as Maman dies on the floor in front of his frozen colleagues.

EXT. CHOWPATTY BEACH. DUSK.

Children are splashing in the sea, flying kites, digging sand, laughing. Salim, Latika and Amir are crouched on the shore watching the sun sink into the sea. Latika is going through Maman's wallet, Salim is fingering the pistol, admiringly. Amir is staring out to sea. Each in their own world, yet sharing swigs from a bottle of Johnny Walker.

LATIKA
Shit, there's thousands here. Thousands and thousands.

SALIM
We should be celebrating.

AMIR
You just killed somebody.

SALIM
He was going to kill us.

AMIR
Where did you get the gun?

SALIM
A whole year's savings. Now, I'm going to have to dump it.

LATIKA
You didn't need to kill him.

CONTINUED:

SALIM
Typical. I save your life and you're on at me. All you ever do is fuck us up. Whenever you're around-

AMIR
- shut up, can't you? Just shut up.

Silence.

SALIM
Why can't you just be happy, huh?

AMIR
Happy?

SALIM
You got what you wanted, didn't you? We should be celebrating.

LATIKA
Yeah. Let's celebrate.

She takes a long swig from the bottle.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
While we can.

She nudges Amir and holds the bottle out to him. Smiles at him. He smiles back, shakes the black dog from his head and takes a long, long drink. Latika and Salim cheer.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY. NIGHT.

A very wobbly Latika and Amir strut through the main entrance of the hotel and up to the main desk. Latika pings the bell with panache.

AMIR
We want a room, boy. Executive Class with smoking. Third floor with balcony will do nicely, no?

LATIKA
Sea-facing, yaar.

RESERVATIONS CLERK
What the bloody hell are you doing, Amir? Are you pissed?
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

RESERVATIONS CLERK (CONT'D)
Do this again and you're out. Now fuck off round the back-

Latika slaps a wad of rupees onto the desk.

AMIR
- 307's free. They checked out this morning.

The Reservation's Clerk glances around. No witnesses. He slides the money off the counter and throws Amir a key.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

An expensive hotel room. With delight, Latika and Amir are emptying the entire contents of the mini-bar into a fruit-bowl. Amir picks up the phone.

AMIR
Room Service hello? 307 here. A bottle of Johnny Walker Red Label- atcha, atcha-

Latika glances through the menu.

LATIKA
Chicken.

AMIR
Chicken- what?...I don't know, chutiyé, every way. Fried, grilled, curried-

LATIKA
Pop Tarts!

AMIR
Pop Tarts, Strawberry. A bottle of Himalayan Spring- a pukka one. Don't you give me one with a glued-on lid, yaar. I know you, Shastri, I've got my eye on you!

Amir laughs and slams down the phone. Latika gives the mini-bar punch a quick stir, picks up the entire bowl and takes a long draught.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Latika!

She comes up for air, grinning. Gives Amir a brief kiss on the cheek.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. LATER.

Hindi music blasts from the tv. Latika is clearly in the shower. The Room Service Wallah departs, leaving a feast of oddities on the table. Amir grandly gives him a tip.

AMIR
And tell Shastri the man in 307 says he's a bhen chod, ok?

Amir giggles. Pours a massive glass of whisky. Knocks on the bathroom door.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Drink for you, Madam.

LATIKA V/O
Stay there. Look away.

AMIR
Atcha, atcha.

LATIKA V/O
I'll know if you're looking....

AMIR
I'm not!

With a towel around her, Latika comes to the doorway where Amir is holding out a drink with his eyes tight shut. She watches this innocent a second with true fondness.

LATIKA
You're a sweet boy, Amir.

She takes the drink from his outstretched hand and disappears into the bathroom, slamming the door with a giggle.

EXT. MUMBAI SLUM STREET. NIGHT.

Salim wanders the crowded streets of a slum. He stops uncertainly at a doorway where a group of men are lolling, smoking. Plucks up his courage.

SALIM
I'm looking for Javed.

MAN
Ja, mada chod. He's not looking for you. Ja!

CONTINUED:

SALIM
I need to see him.

The group of men stir, irritated now. Salim begins to back away, then stops. Pulls the gun from behind his back.

SALIM (CONT'D)
I killed Maman. I'll kill you too. As easy as breathing.

The group are frozen.

JAVED
You killed him?

Javed is standing in the doorway.

JAVED (CONT'D)
My enemy's enemy is my friend, no? So, come in, friend.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. LATER.

A mess of silver platters lie around the room, testament to the largest and most expensive meal money can buy. On the bed lie Amir and Latika, drunk, though still coherent.

LATIKA
Maman's goons will hunt us. You know that?

AMIR
I don't care.

LATIKA
Me neither.

They burst into stupid laughter. The laughter subsides.

AMIR
That dance you were doing. Pila Street. With the hands. Show me.

LATIKA
No.

AMIR
Why not?

LATIKA
Do you still sing?

CONTINUED:

Amir shakes his head.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
Well, I don't dance.

Amir nods.

AMIR
Okay.

They lie there a moment, then Latika rolls over and switches off the light. Rolls back. In the half light, Latika's hands begin to move for Amir, the elegant, alluring hand movements of the bar-girl dancers. Amir stares, mesmerised.

LATIKA
You came back for me.

AMIR
Of course.

LATIKA
I thought you'd forgotten.

AMIR
I never forgot. Not for one day. I knew I'd find you in the end. It's our destiny.

LATIKA
Destiny. Yes.

Latika stops her hands. They stare at each other, their faces inches away from each other. Latika strokes Amir's face.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
Thank you.

And face to face, they slowly fall asleep.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. LATER.

SALIM
Hey.

Amir opens his eyes. Salim is standing over them, swaying with alcohol.

AMIR
Salim?

CONTINUED:

He puts his hand out to Latika.

SALIM
Come.

AMIR
No. Salim....Bhai, you've had a lot to drink...

Amir tries to get up, but Salim's hand is round his throat and pushes him down on the bed.

SALIM
I am the elder. And I am the boss. For once, you do as I say.

AMIR
No.

Salim pulls Latika to her feet.

SALIM
I saved your bloody life, didn't I?

LATIKA
Salim, please-

SALIM
- chup, sali.

As he turns, pulling a protesting Latika, Amir leaps on him. The two brothers go down fighting, but of course it is Salim who comes up on top. Latika launches herself at Salim, but he smashes her away, almost delighted that she has joined in. He drags Amir to the door, laughing.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Salim throws him out into the corridor, scatters rupee notes over him.

SALIM
I am Number One now!

AMIR
Salim, no, no....!

SALIM
Get yourself a room, bhai.

CONTINUED:

Salim slams the door. Amir gets up, bangs on the door, keeps on banging until the door opens and Salim stands there with the pistol pointing straight at Amir's head.

SALIM (CONT'D)
The man with the Colt 45 says chup.

Latika can be seen in the behind him in the corner of the room, sobbing, quietly.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Now go. Or Gunmaster G-9 will shoot you right between the eyes. Boom. Don't think he won't. You have five seconds. One, two, three, four-

Salim cocks the pistol. Then Latika is at the door. Very calm.

LATIKA
Go, Amir. Go.

Amir stares at Latika for a second, then walks away. Salim takes a long look at Latika, then slowly shuts the door.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Huh. I would have stayed. Died like a man.

INSPECTOR
As I recall, last time you had a gun pointed at you- that raid on New Charni Street- you pissed your pants, Srinivas.

AMIR
No. He's right. I walked away. The worst decision of my life.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. MORNING.

Amir walks back down the corridor. He stops at the open door of the room. Inside, a man is changing the sheets on the bed. Amir checks the number on the door.

CONTINUED:

AMIR
This three oh seven?

MAN
Like you need to know. Piss off, back to the kitchens.

Amir walks into the room. Looks around. Sees the fruit bowl in the sink, remnants of their drinking spree.

AMIR
But I was here. Last night. In this room. Where have they gone? Where are they?

The Man advances on him.

MAN

"I was here last night..." I know you. You were on the street last night. And every night until you die. Ja! Security! Koresh!

Amir runs through the Fire Escape door.

INT. HOTEL. FIRE ESCAPE. DAY.

Amir sits on the steps.

PREM V/O
Are you ready for another question?

AMIR V/O
Yes, I'm ready.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

We are back in the Studio.

PREM
For one hundred thousand rupees. Ladies and Gentlemen. Cambridge Circus is in which UK City. Is it A) Oxford, B) Leeds, C) Cambridge, D) London.

Amir smiles.

CONTINUED:

PREM (CONT'D)
He's smiling. Why does that worry me?

EXT. MUMBAI. DAY.

Leaden skies. Torrential rain is hammering on the tin roofs of the slum.

INT. SHACK. DAY.

Eighteen year-old Amir's eyes open. Now with the beginnings of a beard and moustache, Amir wakes in a tiny shack just big enough for a mattress on the floor. He pulls on a shirt, lifts the mattress and takes out his trousers which have been pressing there all night, puts them over his shoulder, picks up his shoes and goes down a ladder.

INT. SHACK. DAY.

He descends into a room and two feet of water that is eddying around the ground floor of the shack. Wades out of the door into the narrow lane of the slum.

EXT. SLUM. DAY.

Amir nods hello to a number of neighbours, also bare-legged, also with their shoes in hand. Together, they wade to higher ground, put on their trousers and shoes and trudge up to the main road.

INT. CALL CENTRE. DAY.

Ultra-modern, glass-windowed office. The words Cultural Studies are written on the white board. Amir walks in with a tray of glasses of chi. He puts a glass down on the young, hip, Teacher's desk and heads out again.

TEACHER
Okay, guys, it's been a big week in UK. Kat is back.

He holds up a copy of Radio Times showing Kat from East Enders smiling at them. A collective groan from the Trainees.

BARDI
She's already back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TEACHER
Bardi...Amir?

AMIR
Oh. Well. She did come back, then she went away when Alfie split up with her and now she's back again. But it looks as if Alfie still fancies Mo after all, so-

TEACHER
- thank you, Amir. Keep up, Bardi. The chi-wallah knows more than you.

Bardi glares at Amir. Amir shrugs apologetically and goes out.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Okay, it's been super-duper hot for UK this week, so there'll be a lot of chat about that- they love their weather- and there's the festival in Edinburgh- Edinburgh?

He points at a young woman Trainee.

NASREEN
Scotland. Kilts, castles, err, haggis? Porridge, the Highlands, mountains. Ben- Ben Nevis?

The Teacher points at another Trainee.

TRAINEE 2
Detective Taggart. Whisky, Sean Connery!

TEACHER
And lochs. Their word for lakes. Good. It's also double bonus time for an upgrade to the 'friends and family' package this week, so remember to push for an upgrade...

EVERYONE
...Every Call!

Amir walks out, turns a corner.

INT. CALL CENTRE. UK FLOOR. DAY.

We are confronted with a room you could swing a Boeing in. Rows and rows of Operators in tiny booths stretch into the distance. On the walls are pictures of London, Tony Blair, red telephone boxes, the Yorkshire Dales, the Highlands- a snapshot of tourist Britain. Huge posters of soap stars and celebrities adorn the rest of the walls. Slogans hang from the ceiling. "When the sun comes up, you'd better be running", "you snooze, you lose", "Upgrade for a better, faster life." "Every call is a new opportunity". Each section of the room has a banner with a British city's name on it and various mock sign-posts for the different aisles. A Manager under the banner "Bradford", is standing over an Operator, listening in on a call. Amir stops by him.

OPERATOR
I am afraid calls to other countries are not covered under that tarrif, Madam...yes...

The Manager draws his finger over his throat.

OPERATOR (CONT'D)
...well, I'll see if I can find that information-

The Manager leans over and presses a button on the computer. With a blip, the screen goes dead.

MANAGER
Two minutes maximum. If you can't sort it by then, put them on hold and then cut the line. Technical glitch. What can you do? That homosexual on Plymouth can piss about with bloody time wasters if he wants. Here on Bradford, we think targets, man! Targets!

The Manager takes a glass of tea from Amir.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
Where've you been? Dave on Cornmarket's virtually lost his voice, there's two on Ilkley Moor who've had their hands up for hours. Come on, move it!

Amir hurries down the aisle signposted "Cornmarket, gets to a male trainee and hands him a tea.

CONTINUED:

Dave glances around to check nobody's looking and slips off his head-set.

DAVE
Two minutes, Amir. I'm on "Millionaire" duty.

AMIR
Rajneesh...

DAVE
It's my turn, Amir. I've had my pee breaks. Please. If he comes just keep your head down and pretend you're doing an upgrade on the-

AMIR
- 'friends and family'. I know.

Amir still looks unwilling.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Two minutes.

Dave heads off towards a Rest and Recreation room, where a big plasma screen on the wall is showing "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire."Amir grabs the jacket from the back of Dave's chair, puts the head-set on and hunches over the booth, just another Operative at work. We become aware that every operator down the Cornmarket aisle- and quite a few other aisles besides- is staring in the direction of the Rest and Recreation Room.

INT. REST AND RECREATION ROOM. DAY.

Dave is watching the screen.

PREM
...if you want a chance to be a contestant on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*, dial the number now.

Dave dives for the doorway and waves.

INT. CALL CENTRE. UK FLOOR. DAY.

Suddenly all the operators are dialling. Almost simultaneously, twenty or so voices say.

OPERATORS
I'd like to be a contestant on *Kaun Benega Crorepati*.

CONTINUED:

Most of the Operators- including the man next to Amir- suddenly lose their tension.

OPERATOR
Bloody bastard. I *never* get it.

AMIR
You have to dial when Prem says "if". "If you want the chance to be a contestant on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire...*" That's when they open the lines.

The Operator looks at him. Amir shrugs.

AMIR (CONT'D)
That's what Anjum in Technical says. He put the system in.

OPERATOR
So why don't you?

WOMAN V/O
Hello? Hello? Have I been transferred again, for God's sake?

Amir freezes with fear. The head-set speaks again with its broad Scottish accent.

WOMAN V/O (CONT'D)
Hello? Jesus, God, will somebody talk to me?

AMIR
Hello, Mrs...

He stares at the computer.

AMIR (CONT'D)
...Mackintosh from King Gussie.

WOMAN V/O
(weary)
It's Kingussie, love. Pronounced Kinoosie.

AMIR
Kinoosie?

WOMAN V/O
So where are *you* from? Abroad, I bet. China or somewhere. What good is-

CONTINUED: (2)

AMIR
- just down the road from your house, Mrs Mackintosh. Next to the loch.

WOMAN V/O
(suspicious)
Oh aye? Which loch?

Amir searches desperately around, spots a picture of Big Ben.

AMIR
Loch Big- Loch Ben. Next door to Detective Taggart's flat.

WOMAN V/O
Loch Ben? Och, no, hen, that's one of the wee ones up in the Highlands. You're all the way up there? But I bet it rains, eh, hen?

AMIR
Indeed yes, Mrs Mackintosh. I have to wade through a metre of water every morning.

WOMAN V/O
No!

AMIR
Yes, yes, Mrs Mackintosh. In my kilt.

WOMAN V/O
Och, no, hen.

Amir puts his feet on the desk.

AMIR
It's alright once I've had my porridge, my haggis and a few Scotch whiskies- and the monsoon's nearly over, so-

WOMAN V/O
- and what monsoon would that be? I'd like to speak to your supervisor, son.

CONTINUED: (3)

AMIR
I don't think that's a good idea. He is a very important man, Mrs Mackintosh-

WOMAN V/O
- get me the supervisor on this line now-

AMIR
- and he doesn't like bloody time wasters.

Amir panics, presses the button he saw the Manager press earlier. The screen goes blank, then reboots itself. Amir looks around. Where the hell is Dave? On the screen, Amir is faced with the question: "what name do you require?" He looks around again, and then with one finger types in the word "Latika". He presses enter. Hundred upon hundred of Latikas with their surnames and phone numbers scroll down the page. He erases her name and enters the name Salim Khan Malik. Presses enter. Fifteen numbers come up. He stares at the numbers for a long time, then types it into his computer and presses dial.

MAN V/O
Yeah?

AMIR
Salim?

MAN V/O
Who wants to know? Do you know what bloody time it is?

Clearly not Amir's brother. Amir cuts the line. Dials the next number.

SALIM V/O
Huh. Hello?

Clearly not his Salim. He cuts the line. Dials again.

SALIM V/O (CONT'D)
Hello? Hello? Who is this?

But Amir can't speak.

SALIM V/O (CONT'D)
Hey. Is someone fucking with me?

Silence.

CONTINUED: (4)

SALIM V/O (CONT'D)
Who is this?

AMIR
I am calling from 3G Communications, Sir. As a valued customer, we are offering you a free upgrade with our 'friends and-

Amir's voice peters out.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Family.

SALIM V/O
Amir? Is that you? Brother? Where are you, man?...I thought you were dead or something...we had to go, Amir. Maman's guys. They were searching the hotel...Amir, say something. Please.

There is another long silence.

AMIR
Hello, Salim.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
Ever been to Cambridge?

AMIR
No.

PREM
Ever been to the circus?

AMIR
No. And I've never been to UK before. But I'll still have a go.

Gasps and laughter from the audience. Amir laughs and shrugs.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Why not?

PREM
Can someone call me an ambulance?

INT. CALL CENTRE. DAY.

A flash of a sign post reading 'Oxford Circus', pointing down one of the aisles. The banner above that section of the warehouse reads 'London'.

CUT TO:

Amir hurrying down another 'Kings Parade' carrying glasses of tea. He glances up to see a large banner that says 'Cambridge'.

CUT TO:

Amir comes back up an aisle named 'Broad Street'. An Operator on the adjacent 'The High' clicks his fingers for another cup. Amir hurries under the sign marked 'Oxford'.

CUT TO:

The signposts of the aisles come faster and faster 'Pembroke Street', 'Trafalgar Square', 'East India Dock' and finally 'Cambridge Circus'.

PREM V/O
So, Amir....

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

Amir is sweating, his face scrunched up in thought.

AMIR
I can't remember.

PREM
You can't remember. Does that mean you did know? Once?

AMIR
I don't think it's Oxford.

PREM
Based on your extensive travelling, right?

CONTINUED:

AMIR
(almost to himself)
Well, Oxford has Broad Street, Saint Aldates, Turl Street, Queen Street, The High and Magdalene Bridge- which is pronounced Maudlin, so-

He stops as he hears the surprised laughter of the audience.

PREM
I thought you hadn't been to UK.

AMIR
Oh, I haven't. And it's not Leeds, because that's Elland Road, Kirkgate Market, Commercial Street, St Peter's-

PREM
(icy)
- what *might* it be then, Amir?

AMIR
Well, I don't think it's Cambridge.

PREM
Cambridge Circus is not in Cambridge? Dare I ask why?

AMIR
Too obvious. There's definitely an Oxford Circus in London, and there's a rowing race between Oxford and Cambridge so there's probably a Cambridge Circus too. It's a guess. I'll go for D) London.

PREM
That's the logic that's got him this far, Ladies and Gentlemen. Who are we to argue? So. Amir. D. Apka final jawab?

AMIR
(shrugs)
If the Gods are with me...Final answer. D.

The lights dim, the music swells as Prem pushes the button on his computer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PREM
Computer-ji, D lock kiya-jaye.

More portentous music.

PREM (CONT'D)
It's been a rollercoaster ride all the way, a pleasure to have you on the show, my friend, but I'm sorry to say that you're....incredibly, absolutely right!

Huge cheers and applause. Even Amir laughs at this. He cannot quite believe it himself.

PREM (CONT'D)
Ladies and Gentlemen, Amir Malik, *lakhpati*!

More applause. Prem hands him a cheque. Amir looks at it. Laughs again.

PREM (CONT'D)
A few hours ago, you were carrying bags for the rich and important. Now *you* are the rich one. What a player, Ladies and Gentleman! What a player.

The lights dim, the music swells. Prem consults his computer.

PREM (CONT'D)
For two hundred and fifty thousand rupees, my friend- a quarter of a million rupees: who invented the revolver? Was it A) Samuel Colt, B) Bruce Browning, C Dan Wesson or D) James Revolver?

Dramatic pause.

INT. HOTEL. NIGHT.

A flash of Salim shooting Maman. Another flash of Salim in the doorway, holding the pistol up to Amir's head.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

AMIR
(suddenly)
A). Samuel Colt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PREM
A). Samuel Colt. Are you sure.

Amir nods.

PREM (CONT'D)
Final answer?

AMIR
Final answer.

The music swells again. Prem presses his computer.

PREM
You had one hundred thousand rupees. If I may-?

He holds out his hand. Amir hands him back the cheque. He tears the cheque in two.

PREM (CONT'D)
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Assistant Porter has won two hundred and fifty thousand rupees, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Cheers and applause from the audience.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

The Inspector is staring hard at Amir.

INSPECTOR
You know about guns?

AMIR
I know about that gun.

A long silence. Then,

INSPECTOR
Continue.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
Getting hot in here, isn't it?

AMIR
(genuinely)
Are you nervous?

CONTINUED:

The audience laugh. Prem is momentarily flustered.

PREM
What? Am *I* nervous? You're the one who's in the hot seat, my friend.

AMIR
Oh. Yes. Sorry.

More laughter.

INT. GALLERY. DAY

JOHNSON
Bloody hell. He's got Prem on the run...

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

Music, lights. Prem presses his computer.

PREM
What sports do you play?

AMIR
None.

PREM
None. Oh, dear, oh dear. Your question for half a million rupees: Which cricketer has scored the most first class centuries in history. Was it A) Sachin Tendulkar, B) Ricky Ponting, C) Jack Hobbs, D) Michael Slater.

Prem allows the question to sink in.

PREM (CONT'D)
You've got a cheque for a quarter of a million rupees in your hands. You've still got two life-lines, Phone A Friend and 50/50. For half a million rupees: pay or play?

EXT. CRICKET GROUND. DAY.

An Indian batsman hits a nicely-timed stroke, heads down the wicket for a single. Turns. The other batsman is taking a second run.

CONTINUED:

The Indian tries to halt the other batsman with a shout, then succumbs to the inevitable and charges down the wicket. A fielder hurls the ball at the stumps. The bails fly off.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

AMIR
I'll play.

Tense laughter from the audience. Prem holds up the cheque. Amir nods. Prem tears it up slowly. Allows the pieces to fall to the floor.

PREM
The dreams of so many. On the floor.

EXT. TOWER BLOCK. DAY.

A terrified Amir is riding the construction lift to the top of a high building, still just a shell but buzzing with carpenters, bricklayers, cable-layers. A couple of workers in the lift grin at his fear. The lift stops at the top. Amir gets out. Looks around. He is miles up. Alone.

SALIM
Amir!

Amir looks around. There is Salim standing on the edge of the building. He saunters over to Amir, his arms outstretched in theatrical greeting. He is groomed, expensively dressed with the best mobile money can buy dangling from a gold chain around his neck.

SALIM (CONT'D)
God is good, bhai. God is good.

He put out his arms to embrace Amir. With as much force as he can muster, Amir punches him in the face. Salim falls to the ground, holds his bloody lip.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Maman's boys were after us. Had to skip. Left a message at reception. Waited weeks for you in Nagpur. You never came. How come, huh?

AMIR
There was no message at reception.

Salim looks him straight in the eyes.

CONTINUED:

SALIM
Definitely left a message.

Amir shakes his head.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Fucking Reception-wallahs, huh? Amir, I am your brother...

Salim holds out his arm. Eventually, Amir pulls him up. He falls into Amir. Holds his head in both hands.

SALIM (CONT'D)
We are blessed, are we not?

AMIR
Yes. Yes we are, you bastard.

And he hugs Salim tight.

SALIM
Come. Come.

He goes over to the very edge of the building. They can see for miles across the city.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Can you believe it? This was our slum. We lived just there, huh? Now it is business, apartments, call centres...Fuck USA, fuck China. India is at the centre of the world, now, bhai. And I am at the centre of the centre, Amir. This is all Javed's.

AMIR
Javed? The Gangster? From our slum? You work for him?

SALIM
Who else would protect us from Maman's gang, huh?

AMIR
What do you do for him?

SALIM
Anything he asks.

Salim's mobile rings.

CONTINUED: (2)

SALIM (CONT'D)
He is coming. You must go. My card.

He hands Amir a card.

AMIR
What for?

SALIM
You think I am going to let you out of my sight again, sala? You stay with me now. Ab phut!

AMIR
Salim, where's Latika?

SALIM
Still? She's gone, Amir. Long gone.

INT. SALIM'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Amir is asleep on a mattress on the floor of a smart apartment. A mobile phone rings. The muffled sound of Salim talking quietly next door. Then, Salim creeps into the room, checks to see Amir is asleep, unlocks a desk drawer and brings out his pistol. He puts it in a hold-all and goes out the front door. Amir's eyes snap open. He has seen it all.

AMIR V/O
Slum dogs never sleep, only nap. He would disappear for a couple of days and come back changed. Sometimes elated-

INT. SALIM'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

The door bangs open and a giggling-drunk, half-naked Bar Girl drags the sleeping Amir up and into the bathroom.

BAR GIRL
He has flipped! I can't do anything with him....

Salim is in the bath, bathing, literally, in money.

SALIM
Look at it, bhai, look at it!

INT. SALIM'S APARTMENT. DAWN.

AMIR V/O
Sometimes the opposite.

Amir creeps towards Salim's bedroom door. He pushes it open a fraction to see Salim crouched on the floor in prayer, sobbing quietly.

SALIM
(whispering)
Aé khuda mujhé baksh dé mainé bahut gunaah kiyé hain....

AMIR V/O
But younger brothers don't interfere. Mostly.

EXT. SALIM'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Salim comes out of his apartment block. Gets into his jeep. Drives off. Doesn't notice Amir in the motor rickshaw that pulls out and follows him.

EXT. JAVED'S BUNGALOW. DAY.

Salim approaches a gate-house to a large bungalow. The Door-Keeper nods to him, rings a bell. From the rickshaw, Amir watches a woman come to the door. Latika. Eighteen, completely beautiful and rich. She hands Salim a package and goes back inside. Salim gets in his jeep and drives away.

EXT. JAVED'S BUNGALOW. DAY.

Amir approaches the Door-Keeper's gate-house.

AMIR
Baba, I am the new cook from the agency. A thousand apologies, I am late for the Lady of the House.

The Door-Keeper grunts and goes inside. After a brief pause, he returns.

DOOR-KEEPER
She doesn't know anything about any cook. There's supposed to be a dishwasher being delivered. Know anything about that?

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Baba, *I* am your dishwasher!

The Door-keeper grunts at this attempt at humour. Latika appears at the gate.

LATIKA
Haven't I told you, don't interrupt when I'm watching-

She looks at Amir. Is silenced briefly.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
- come inside. I'll show you the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Latika and Amir go into the kitchen. *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* plays on the tv in the background. She turns and hugs him tight. They laugh with happiness.

LATIKA
(delighted)
Amir, Amir....

Then she releases him, turns away, stares out of the window. Amir smiles hopefully at her. But there is sadness in her now.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
Aré wa, Amir....

She takes her sunglasses off, rubs her eyes. There is a bruise there.

AMIR
You've hurt your eye.

LATIKA
Why are you here?

AMIR
To see you.

LATIKA
Well. You see me.

She stands there, challenging. On the tv, somebody is winning money.

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Why does everyone love this programme?

LATIKA
It's the chance to escape, isn't it? Walk into another life. Doesn't everyone want that?

AMIR
You have another life. A rich one.

LATIKA
Who'd have thought it possible? A slum dog, with all this.

AMIR
Are you happy?

LATIKA
I have five star food, five star clothes. I sleep in a bed, not on the street. I throw food away, Amir. From where we come from, that is happiness.

AMIR
You don't look so happy with a black eye.

LATIKA
You turn up here out of nowhere, telling me I'm not happy: how dare you?

Voices at the gate-house.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
God, he will kill you. Here.

She throws him an apron. He gets it on just in time for Javed to walk in.

JAVED
First you want a dishwasher, now a bloody cook-

LATIKA
-I just thought-

JAVED
- the cricket's on.

Javed changes channel and dials on his mobile.

CONTINUED: (2)

JAVED (CONT'D)
Why do you always watch that shit? Huh? I'm already a millionaire.

He laughs at his own joke. Turns to Amir.

JAVED (CONT'D)
Well, come on then, *Cook*. I'm hungry. Get me a sandwich.

AMIR
Immediately, Sir.

Latika hurries around the kitchen getting out bread and condiments, whispering while Javed talks on the phone.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Come away with me.

LATIKA
Chutiyé. Away where? And live on what? What can you provide? What have you *got*, Amir?

AMIR
Love.

JAVED
(on the mobile)
..yeah. He's on eighty-five. I want four lakh on him making a century. What are you giving?...Okay, make it five lakh.

Javed pours himself a glass of whisky, never taking his eyes from the television.

TV COMMENTATOR
We are watching history unfold today at the Wankhedé Stadium as Sachin Tendulkar carves his way towards another magnificent century and the record books. His thirty-eighth century- the most by any Indian cricketer ever...

LATIKA
Love. That will feed us, will it?

AMIR
It won't buy you a new dishwasher, but it might make you happy.

CONTINUED: (3)

LATIKA
Where have you been? Get in the real world, Amir.

AMIR
You and me. That is the real world. Come away with me.

Latika snatches the sandwich from him and gives it to Javed. Goes back to Amir, whispers under cover of putting condiments away.

LATIKA
You're crazy. I'll be gone soon, anyway. Bombay's too hot for-

She indicates Javed.

AMIR
Where?

LATIKA
You think he'd tell me?

JAVED
Straight bat, straight bat, dammit.

Then the batsman at the other end calls to take a second run.

JAVED (CONT'D)
No! A single!

Tendulkar seems to agree, tries to halt the other batsman with a shout, then succumbs to the inevitable and charges down the wicket. A fielder hurls the ball at the stumps. The bails fly off.

JAVED (CONT'D)
No, no, no! Fucking, stupid idiot...

He flings his glass of whisky at the television. Suddenly tastes what he has been eating.

JAVED (CONT'D)
And what is this shit supposed to be, mader chod? Get out. Get out!

Javed throws the sandwich at him and slams out of the room. His footsteps can be heard stomping into another room.

CONTINUED: (4)

LATIKA
Now go, before he kills us both.

She leads Amir to the door.

JAVED
Latika, where's my fucking shirt? The Armani.

Latika shouts over her shoulder.

LATIKA
Coming!

Back to Amir.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
(whispered)
You want to do something for me?

AMIR
Anything.

LATIKA
Then forget me.

AMIR
I'll wait at VT station. Five o'clock every day until you come.

She shakes her head.

AMIR (CONT'D)
I love you.

LATIKA
So what, Amir? So what? (loudly) Now, get out and tell your no-good agency not to send anybody else until they've learnt to cook. You hear?

She slams the door. Hurries back into the kitchen, throws Javed's plate into the sink. The Door-keeper comes in.

DOOR-KEEPER
Madam, your dishwasher has arrived.

Leaning over the sink, Latika weeps silently.

INT. SALIM'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Salim has his hand around Amir's throat.

SALIM
Why can't you let it alone? You want money, I'll give you money. Girls? I can get you girls.

AMIR
You know what I want.

SALIM
You're like some crazy man- you're obsessed.

AMIR
She is my destiny, Salim.

SALIM
Know what your destiny is, crazy boy? A bullet between the eyes. And after that, he'll kill her. Is that what you want? Huh?

AMIR
Me, I don't care. Latika? She's already half dead.

Salim takes his hand away from Amir's neck.

SALIM
Yes. About that, you are right.

AMIR
You sold her.

SALIM
(fierce)
I didn't sell her. Javed wanted her. He gets what he wants.

He turns away bitterly.

SALIM (CONT'D)
She's doing alright. Get it into your thick head, Amir. She's not yours and she never bloody will be.

INT. STUDIO. DAY.

PREM
Time for a commercial break, Ladies and Gentlemen. I know, I know, I can't stand the tension either. Don't even think about leaving your seat. We'll be back.

The lights flick back on. Prem slumps back in his chair.

PREM (CONT'D)
You've got the luck of the devil, yaar, I'll give you that.

AMIR
I- I need to-

PREM
Oh, the toilet. Sure. Naveed, Amir wants the bog.

The Floor Manager and a Security Guard usher Amir off-stage. Prem looks up at the gallery, raises his eyes at Johnson. Some show. Then he gathers himself and heads off-stage.

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

The clock reads five oh three. Amir stands stands on the footbridge. Humanity washes around him. His eyes dart around, frightened to miss her. Checks the clock again. Six. The platform is almost deserted. He wanders away.

INT. CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Prem wanders down the corridor followed by a Security Guard. Another Security Guard is waiting at the entrance to the toilet. Prem goes in, leaving the two Guards in the corridor.

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

Amir stands on the footbridge gazing down at the hordes of commuters. Five o'clock, five fifteen, five thirty. Six. Amir rests his head against the railings.

INT. TOILET. NIGHT.

Amir is in one of the cubicles. Prem goes to the urinal. Unzips.

PREM
Nerves finally got the better of you, huh? Not surprised. You're something special, Amir. A guy from the slums wins a million, eh? You'll be a legend for the rest of time, my friend. Shit, they will write songs about you.

AMIR O/S
I'm not going to win a million. I don't know the answer.

PREM
You're one hell of a guesser, then.

Prem finishes pissing. Goes over to the washbasins, runs the taps and washes his hands.

AMIR O/S
I really don't.

PREM
That doesn't seem to matter with you, though, does it? Maybe it's written, huh? Maybe it's written.

Prem leaves. Amir flushes and comes out of the cubicle. Goes to the washbasins. In the mist on the mirror above the taps is written the letter "D". Amir stares at it. Gradually it fades, leaving only the growing fury on his face staring back at him.

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

Amir stalks back onto the set. Marches up to Prem. Grabs him by the collar.

AMIR
Why would you do that?

Prem looks around, faux surprised. The Stage Manager hurries on. Prem is magnanimous.

CONTINUED:

PREM
It's okay, it's okay. Just stress, man. Who can blame him, huh?

FLOOR MANAGER
We're on in thirty-five.

PREM
Relax, Amir, relax.

The Floor Manager helps Amir back into his chair. Nita comes over and powders his face.

NITA
You're doing fine. Just fine.

PREM
Me and you, Amir, we're the same. I was born in the slum just like you. These jokers here, they don't have any idea what you've been through. I do. You're going to be a legend.

TALKBACK V/O
Thirty seconds.

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

The digital clocks show five fifteen. On the footbridge, Amir stares down at the commuters. Suddenly, the crowds stop. Only one person in this sea is moving. Latika, over the other side of the station, a world away. She is scanning the motionless crowd, as wired as he is.

AMIR
Latika!

She looks up. Sees him. Smiles the most amazing smile. And then the station explodes into movement again and she is lost in the crowd. Shoving the descending river of people out of his way, Amir is forging a path down the footbridge.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Latika! Latika!

But though he is screaming her name, his voice is swallowed by the noise around him. Then he sees Salim and another man also fighting a way towards her.

AMIR (CONT'D)
Latika!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frightened now, he shoves through the tide of people. He is making progress, but so are Salim and his Accomplice. Amir is now on the platform 17. Shouts her name again. She turns to him, smiling, then sees the alarm on his face. Salim and his Accomplice leap through a train onto her platform. She starts running, is lost in the crowd. Salim turns towards Amir, points a hatred-filled finger at him.

ACCOMPLICE
Salim!

He turns and runs off along the platform after Latika. Amir follows.

EXT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

Latika is jumping the tracks, crossing in front of trains. But Salim is gaining on her. He brings her down and drags her across to Javed's waiting Mercedes. Amir pushes through the crowds just in time to see Salim bundling her into the car. Latika twists her head to see Amir as the car skids off, the Accomplice at the wheel. Amir screams with hopeless fury.

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

TALKBACK V/O
Fifteen seconds.

Amir and Prem stare at each other. A battle of eyes.

PREM
Do the right thing and in approximately three minutes you will be as famous as me.

TALKBACK V/O
Ten seconds.

PREM
And as rich as me.

TALKBACK V/O
Five seconds.

PREM
Almost.

TALKBACK V/O
Four, three...

CONTINUED:

PREM
From rags to Raja. It's your destiny.

TALKBACK V/O
...we're on.

Applause from the audience.

PREM
Welcome back to *Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?* In the chair tonight is Amir Malik- as if we don't know! In an amazing run, Amir has won two hundred and fifty thousand rupees but, not content with that, has chosen to gamble for half a million. The question one more time: Which cricketer has scored the most first class centuries in history. Was it A) Sachin Tendulkar, B) Ricky Ponting, C) Jack Hobbs, D) Michael Slater. Any ideas?

AMIR
I know it isn't Sachin Tendulkar.

PREM
That's a start. So, it could be Ricky Ponting, Jack Hobbs or Michael Slater.

AMIR
I'll use a life-line. Fifty-fifty.

PREM
Okay. Computer, take away two wrong answers.

Music swells, lights dim.

PREM (CONT'D)
Well, you were right about Sachin Tendulkar. The computer has taken away A) Sachin Tendulkar and C) Ricky Ponting. That leaves you a fifty-fifty choice, Amir. B) Jack Hobbs or D) Michael Slater. What do you think? Decision time. For half a million rupees. Your answer: B) Jack Hobbs or D) Michael Slater.

CONTINUED: (2)

A hideous, never-ending pause while Amir stares into Prem's eyes.

AMIR
B.

A barely perceptible jump *from Prem.*

PREM
You sure? Not D) Michael Slater? The Australian? Great cricketer.

AMIR
B. Jack Hobbs.

PREM
Apka final jawab?

AMIR
Final Answer.

PREM
Computer-ji B lock kiya-jaye.

Prem turns to the computer. Music. Lights.

PREM (CONT'D)
With one hundred and ninety- seven first class centuries, the answer is...Jack Hobbs!

The audience go wild. Prem's smile is thin.

PREM (CONT'D)
Amir Malik, you have just won half a million rupees!

The camera goes off Prem for a second. He mimes a disgusted spit. Then he is back on.

PREM (CONT'D)
I cannot believe what I am seeing here, tonight, Ladies and Gentlemen....So, are you ready for the final question for one million rupees?

AMIR
Not really, but...maybe it is written, *no?*

CONTINUED: (3)

PREM
Maybe, indeed. Okay, okay. For one million rupees, the final question on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

The lights dim again, the portentous music increases. Suddenly a klaxon sounds. The audience burst into nervous laughter and groans. Prem laughs.

PREM (CONT'D)
Ohhhhh! Just when I thought I would need a pacemaker fitted, we're out of time! What a show, Ladies and Gentlemen, what a show. Join us tomorrow night to see if Amir Malik has made the biggest mistake of his life or has just won half a million rupees....Same place, same time. You wouldn't dare miss it. Goodnight!

Applause. The studio lights come up. Prem switches off his smile as fast as the cameras switch off.

EXT. JAVED'S BUNGALOW. DAY.

Waving a kitchen knife in on hand, a desperate Amir slams through the gates of Javed's bungalow, the objecting Doorkeeper running along behind. He bangs open the front door.

AMIR
Latika!

INT. JAVED'S BUNGALOW. DAY.

Stops dead. The place has been stripped of everything. Not a single thing remains. Amir runs into another room. As empty as the first. He stops in his tracks.

DOOR-KEEPER
Told you.

AMIR
Where? Where is she?

DOOR-KEEPER
Dunno.

He grabs the Door-keeper by the shirt-collar, slams him up against the wall. Holds the knife against his throat.

CONTINUED:

AMIR
Where?

DOOR-KEEPER
I don't know! Wouldn't say, would they? They had to get out fast. The police. Honestly.

Amir lets go of the Door-keeper. Goes hopelessly to the window. On the window sill is a phone. He picks it up. There is a dial tone. Amir rummages in his trouser pocket. Gets out the battered card with Salim's details on. Dials. Salim picks up.

AMIR
Where are you? Where is she?

SALIM V/O
Where you'll never find her. Or me. You could have joined us, you fucking idiot. You've lost everything now. Everything.

The line goes dead. Amir slides to the floor...

INT. SALIM'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

...the camera pulls out from Amir's face revealing that Amir is sitting on the floor of Salim's apartment. He looks at the knife in his hand.

INT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. DAY.

PREM
This way, Amir, this way. Great show, my friend.

In the half-light, Prem guides him to a stage door.

EXT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. DAY.

Amir steps outside the backstage door. Leans on the rail and takes a huge breath. Immediately, a blanket is thrown over his head and two police men bundle him into the back of a police van. Johnson joins Prem at the back-stage door as the van pulls away, sirens screaming.

PREM
How did that slum kid just do that?

CONTINUED:

JOHNSON
Know what? I've absolutely no idea.

PREM
Even when I fed him the wrong answer the little shit got it right.

Johnson stares at him.

JOHNSON
You gave him an answer?

PREM
Well, I didn't exactly-

JOHNSON
- you're out. You finish this show and then you're out.

Johnson walks away.

PREM
Oh, come on...

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

INSPECTOR
It is all bizarrely plausible. And yet...

AMIR
Because I am a slum dog, I am a liar, right?

INSPECTOR
Most of you are. Funny, you don't seem that interested in the money.

The Inspector goes to the door. Turns.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
I'll find out. One way or another, I'll find out.

Srinivas and the Inspector leave. Amir sits there. Lets his head drop. The camera floats from the room, down the dingy corridor and out through a window...

EXT. POLICE STATION. DAY.

....alighting on a crowd of hundreds of people jostling to get a view of the building. News crews are setting up around them.A tv Reporter is doing a piece to camera.

TV REPORTER
....behind the walls of this police station lies the mystery all of India is talking about. Did Amir Malik, an uneducated, eighteen year-old boy from the slums of Mumbai win half a million rupees by fair means or foul? And in the crowds all around me there is an even bigger question. Will he be back on the show tonight to play for a million...?

INT. CANTEEN. DAY.

The Inspector and Sergeant Srinivas are tucking into a plate of samosas. They don't notice the Commmissioner of Police stalk into the canteen. Everyone else does. There is a lot of standing and saluting. The Commissioner makes a direct line for the Inspector. After an appalling moment of stuffing a vast samosa into his mouth, Srinivas looks up straight into the eyes of the Officer.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Sir?

The Inspector looks up. Caught out, he leaps to his feet, tries to speak with his huge mouthful, stops, has a couple of swallows. Motions for him to sit down.

INSPECTOR
Samosa, Sir?

The Commissioner dumps a copy of the *Times of India* down on the table. Then the *Hindustan Times*, the *Amar Ujala* and the *Afternoon Dispatch* thump down after them. All have photos of Amir on KBC on the front page.

COMMISIONER OF POLICE
Well?

INSPECTOR OF POLICE
There's no actual charge as yet, Sir.

CONTINUED:

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
No charge. Have you seen outside, Inspector?

INSPECTOR
No, Sir. I- the suspect-

The Commissioner strides to the window, lifts the blind. Grunts at the Inspector who hurries over. Looks alarmed.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
That's-

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
- yes, yes! The boy's a bloody hero.

INSPECTOR
The fact is, Sir, I'm not convinced he's telling the truth, but I'm not sure he's lying, either. And whether he actually cheated-

COMMISSIONER OF POLICE
- of course he bloody has. *I* never get past the third question. Have you any idea how many people are watching us? Hmm? You want half of India to see a slum dog get the better of the Mumbai City Police Force? Make us look like a bunch of idiots?

INSPECTOR
No, sir.

COMMISIONER OF POLICE
Well then. He's in for fraud, so you'd better find fraud. Fast.

INSPECTOR
Yes, sir.

The Commissioner walks out. The Inspector stares after him, throws down his napkin into his food with a sigh.

INT. JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

Pulling back from the tv, we are in a palatial living room. Dealing cards to Salim, is Javed Khan. A couple of Bar Girls giggle next to Javed. Pouring drinks at a sideboard is Latika.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She is frozen watching the pictures of Amir on the television news. Javed glances up at the screen, clearly not recognising Amir on a clip from KBC. Salim, too is staring, wide-eyed at the tv. Latika turns to Javed revealing a cheek scarred by ugly, disfiguring knife scars.

JAVED
Not this shit. Fuck off and watch it in the kitchen if you're so bothered.

Javed picks up the remote and switches over to a music channel. Latika hurries out.

JAVED (CONT'D)
What about my bloody whisky, woman?

But she has already gone. He growls after her.

JAVED (CONT'D)
Hey, Salim.

He motions Salim to get him a drink. Javed's mobile rings as Salim goes over to the sideboard. Shifts a bottle to the back.

SALIM
We're out. I'll just get- Jamal.

Salim hurries out.

INT . JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. SALIM'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Another set of keys inside a drawer. And a pistol. Salim stares at both for a long time. Finally, picks up the keys.

SALIM
(to himself)
Apka final jawab.

He finds this faintly amusing.

INT. JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Latika sits in the kitchen, staring at the tv, tears running down her cheeks. A reporter is talking in front of an enlarged photograph of Amir. Latika wipes away the tears quickly as Salim comes in. He locks the door behind him. Stares at the tv.

CONTINUED:

SALIM
That boy. He will never give up. Never.

He shakes his head.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Crazy chutiyé.

Salim approaches Latika. She flinches as he walks towards her. He puts the car keys in front of her.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Ja. Go.

LATIKA
But-

SALIM
- just drive. There won't be another chance. Go.

Latika takes the keys. Hesitates.

LATIKA
He'll kill you.

Salim smiles, shakes his head.

SALIM
It is not written.

JAVED O/S
Salim!

Salim goes to the back door. Unlocks it. Opens it for her.

LATIKA
Salim, I....can't.

Salim points at the television.

SALIM
You have to. It'll take you two hours if you drive fast. Here.

He holds out his mobile phone.

SALIM (CONT'D)
For God's sake, hold on to it.

Latika takes it. Salim takes hold of both sides of her head for a moment.

CONTINUED: (2)

SALIM (CONT'D)
For what I have done, please forgive me.

Salim releases her.

SALIM (CONT'D)
Go. Have a good life.

Salim puts his hands together in blessing. She leaves. Salim shuts the door, locks it. Smiles.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

Amir is dozing in the chair. He wakes with a shout. Srinivas has just thrown a glass of water in his face. He unlocks the handcuffs. Amir looks up at him. Srinivas shrugs.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
You're back on the show.

INT. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

The audience for *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* are standing in line. They are being body-searched by police. Mobiles are being confiscated and put in bags.

INT. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

Gaffers make last-minute adjustments to the lights shining on the empty chairs in the middle of the set. Camera positions are checked by the Floor Manager.

INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT.

Srinivas walks Amir through the police station, past the Inspector sitting at a desk, leafing through the rule book. He lets Amir pass, then,

INSPECTOR OF POLICE
What happened? To the girl? Latika?

AMIR
If I knew, I wouldn't be here.

Amir walks on. The Inspector watches him all the way. Throws the rule book across the room.

INT. POLICE JEEP. NIGHT.

Amir sits in the back of the police jeep. It pulls out of the police station car park into a sea of people all cheering and shouting at the jeep. Amir looks terrified.

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

Latika drives through the slums of Mumbai. She hoots her horn furiously at a cart-driver ambling across the road.

INT. POLICE JEEP. NIGHT.

The jeep stops at the lights and a beggar wanders up, tapping on the windscreen. The beggar studies Amir's face for a second, then starts shouting and pointing at him.

BEGGAR
Crorepati! Crorepati!

Other beggars- just like the one Amir used to be- join him and start cheering and applauding. The jeep pulls away.

INT. INSPECTOR'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

The Inspector idly picks up the rule book. Glances at it. Suddenly snaps alert. Kicks Srinivas' chair.

INSPECTOR
Srinivas! Section seven. "Contestants eligibility... connections with the company, family or friends of staff"...here! "Nobody with a criminal record is eligible to participate in the show." Maybe he didn't cheat, but we've got him all the same.

Srinivas looks puzzled.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
Murder. Maman.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
That was Salim.

INSPECTOR
Accessory!

CONTINUED:

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
If it was ever reported.

INSPECTOR
Well, find out, bhen chod!

EXT. SLUM. NIGHT.

At the chi stall, everyone gathers around the tv, watching.

EXT. ROADSIDE CHI HOUSE. NIGHT.

A rickshaw parks up next to a hundred others. The Driver leaps out, abandoning the irate business man in the back and runs to the tv in the café.

EXT. ROADSIDE SHACKS. NIGHT.

All along the highway, one by one the televisions in a hundred shacks flick on, silhouetting the family huddled in front of it.

INT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

In the half-light, Amir is being powdered by Nita. Prem looks on, apparently dispassionate.

TALKBACK V/O
Two minutes.

NITA
Good luck.

Prem sneers at her. She finishes powdering Amir, turns on her heel and walks away.

PREM
Hey. What about me? I'm sweating, here.

NITA
You should be.

She gives him the Indian finger.

EXT. MUMBAI STREET. NIGHT.

The traffic is gridlocked. Latika is pumping the horn.

CONTINUED:

LATIKA
Come on, come on!

She glances out of the window, sees one of the roadside shacks with the television on. Gets out of the car and runs to it.

INT. POLICE OFFICE. NIGHT.

Sergeant Srinivas is flicking through files in a dingy basement. Finally, he pulls one out. Scans through it.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Boss!

Srinivas runs out of the room.

INT. POLICE STATION. NIGHT.

Runs into the main room.

SERGEANT SRINIVAS
Shooting at Pila Street, October 19th...Maman Hossani....Victim pronounced dead at scene. Suspects fled, two males, late teens, one female, late teen.

The Commisioner grabs his hat.

COMMISIONER OF POLICE
Let's go.

INT. POLICE CAR. NIGHT.

Sergeant Srinivas is driving furiously through the traffic. The Inspector stares out as the car flashes alongside hundreds of roadside shacks, every single one lit only by the glow of the tv, each one tuned to *Who Wants to be a Millionaire.*

INSPECTOR OF POLICE
We've been asking the wrong question. Not *how* is he doing this, *why* is he doing this?

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

Prem and Amir walk on-stage. Blinding light. They take their seats to tumultuous applause.

CONTINUED:

PREM
Welcome back to *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* I can safely say that tonight is the biggest night of both of our lives, Ladies and Gentlemen. Amir Malik, the Assistant Porter from Juhu has already won half a million rupees. Tonight, he can walk away with that half million or he can gamble for a million. He has just one more question to answer. Amir, are you ready to play?

AMIR
Yes.

The lights dim, the music rumbles. Prem pushes the button on his computer. Pauses. Gets conversational.

PREM
Big reader, are you Amir? A lover of literature?

Amir just shrugs.

AMIR
I can read.

Nervous laughter from the audience.

PREM
Lucky! In Alexandre Dumas' book, The Three Musketeers, two of the musketeers are called Athos and Porthos. What was the name of the third musketeer. Was it A) Aramis, B) Cardinal Richelieu, C) D'Artagnan, D) Planchet.

An involuntary laugh comes out of Amir's mouth.

INT. SCHOOL. DAY.

A flash of Mister Nandha the school-teacher crashing the book down on Amir's head.

INT. SCHOOL. DAY.

Rows of children reading.

CONTINUED:

MISTER NANDHA
Next chapter on Monday when Athos and Porthos meet the third musketeer.

EXT. SLUM. DAY.

Another flash of Mister Nandha among the rioters running up the street towards them, hate in his face, knife in hand.

EXT. BUILDER'S YARD. NIGHT.

Monsoon rain. Amir and Salim, huddled in their concrete pipes.

AMIR
She can be the third musketeer.

EXT. ORHANAGE. PATH. NIGHT.

The teenage Amir is humming along cheerfully to his song as they walk down the path towards the shack where he is to be blinded.

SALIM
(conversationally)
Athos.

Amir is suddenly alert. Slows

AMIR
Porthos?

Salim nods. Big smile. Puts a hand on Amir's shoulder.

SALIM
When I say.

PUNNOOOSE
(glancing back)
Come on.

INT. ROADSIDE SHACK. NIGHT.

In the shack, sitting on an upturned oil drum, surrounded by puzzled Indians in rags, a slow smile comes to Latika's face.

EXT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

The Inspector and Sergeant Srinivas get out of the police car and run to the backstage door. The Inspector opens it and stands, file in hand, watching Amir on stage through a gap in the set.

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

Camera on Prem.

PREM
The million rupee question: and he's smiling. I guess you know the answer.

AMIR
Would you believe it? I don't

Amir laughs. There's nothing else to do. The audience groan.

PREM
You don't? So, you're going to take the money and walk?

AMIR
No.

PREM
No?

AMIR
I'll play.

A gasp from the audience.

PREM
You just said you don't know the answer. I heard that, right?

AMIR
I'd like to phone a friend.

PREM
We're going to the wire, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are going to the wire. The final Life-line. Here we go....

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

Prem presses his computer. Ominous rumble of drums. The lights dim. A phone can be heard ringing, the amplified sound echoing around the studio.

PREM
It's ringing.

The phone continues to ring.

INT. ROADSIDE SHACK. NIGHT.

Latika is staring at the television. Then an electric current seems to shoot through her and she is running, dodging the static traffic, street vendors, the odd cow, heading for her abandoned car. Hooting horns, shouting drivers. The phone rings on...

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

And on...

PREM
Doesn't look as if your friend is in, Amir. Who is it?

AMIR
My brother's number, but-

PREM
- the sort of brother who'd go for a stroll out on the million rupee question?

AMIR
It's the only number I know.

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

On the passenger seat of Latika's car, Salim's phone continues to ring...

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

...and ring.

PREM
You're on your own, Amir.

CONTINUED:

Prem looks up at the gallery. Johnson shakes his head, mimes cutting his throat.

INT. CAR. NIGHT.

Latika wrestles the door open, grabs the phone.

INT. STUDIO. NIGHT.

Prem opens his mouth to speak. Then, out of the darkness of the studio,

LATIKA V/O
Hello?

A gasp from the audience.

LATIKA V/O (CONT'D)
Hello? Amir?

PREM
Wow! That's cutting it fine. I'm guessing this isn't your brother. This is-

LATIKA V/O
My name is Latika.

The first real smile of Amir's adult life.

AMIR
Where are you?

LATIKA V/O
I'm- I'm safe.

EXT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

A small smile spreads across the Inspector's face.

INT. JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. NIGHT.

Javed pulls the Bar Girl from him, stares open-mouthed at the television.

JAVED
What the bloody fuck?

He pushes the girl off him. Gets to his feet.

CONTINUED:

JAVED (CONT'D)
Latika! Salim!

INT. STUDIO/ INT. ROADSIDE SHACK. NIGHT.

PREM
Okay! So, Latika, you want to hear the question one more time? And let's be clear about this. A million rupees rides on your answer: in Alexandre Dumas' novel-

LATIKA V/O
- it's A). Aramis.

PREM
Woah! You sure about that, Latika?

LATIKA V/O
Yes. The third Musketeer is Aramis.

PREM
I really hope so. Are you going to go with that, Amir?

AMIR
Yes. A). Aramis.

PREM
If your friend is right, you walk away with a million rupees. If your friend is wrong, you lose half a million. Like that.

Prem snaps his fingers.

PREM (CONT'D)
Apka final jawab?

AMIR
Yes. Final answer. Aramis.

The lights dim, the music crescendoes. A buzz runs around the audience. Prem pushes the button on his computer. Stares hard at Amir.

CONTINUED:

PREM
Computer-ji A lock kiya-jaye. Amir Malik, Assistant Porter from Mumbai, for a million rupees, you were asked who the Third Musketeer was in the novel by Alexandre Dumas. You used your final life-line to phone a friend. You answered A) Aramis.....which is...I have to tell you...the correct answer!

Wild applause. Prem jumps up and pulls a bemused Amir to his feet, raising his arm in the air. Amir is smiling, but disorientated.

PREM (CONT'D)
Ladies and Gentlemen, Amir Malik, millionaire! What a night! We have all been present at the making of history, Ladies and Gentlemen! Amir Malik, millionaire!

AMIR
Latika? Latika?

To ever-increasing roars and applause from the audience, Prem escorts Amir off-stage.

INT. ROADSIDE SHACK. NIGHT.

The line goes dead in Latika's hand. She stares down at the phone. The bemused family are still eying her, like an alien. She smiles at them and goes out. The traffic on the road is still grid-locked. She starts walking, faster and faster. Then she breaks into a run.

INT. JAVED'S SAFE-HOUSE. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

A small tv in the bathroom. Salim smiles.

SALIM
God is good.

JAVED O/S
Salim! Teri ma ki chute! Salim!

Javed is banging on the door. Salim gets up from where he has been praying. He climbs into the bath which is full of bank notes and lies down amongst the money. He reaches across for the pistol and picks it up. Puts it against the side of his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Smiles slightly and pulls the trigger just as Javed smashes down the door. An explosion of white...

INT. STUDIO. BACKSTAGE. NIGHT.

...as flash-bulbs are popping. Johnson, Prem and Amir are being posed by photographers. A giant-sized cheque for a million rupees is manhandled onto the floor by the Floor Manager and an Assistant amidst much cheering and laughter. Amir is snapped next to Johnson and a scowling Prem. The Inspector approaches Johnson.

INSPECTOR
Just one more thing to do, Sir.

Johnson looks worried.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
This way, please.

The Inspector puts the handcuffs on Amir and escorts him from the stage.

INT. POLICE JEEP. NIGHT.

Amir sits silent in the back seat next to the Inspector as Srinivas drives through the traffic. Then:

AMIR
Truth alone triumphs, huh? I should have known better.

INSPECTOR
Stop.

Srinivas stops the police jeep. The Inspector gets out of the jeep. Unlocks the handcuffs. Holds the back door open for Amir.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
Thought you might need a lift, Sir.

He nods towards the outside world. Dazed, Amir gets out.

EXT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. DAY.

The police jeep pulls away. Amir finds himself gazing up at VT station. Slowly, he wanders inside.

INT. CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI TERMINUS. NIGHT.

VT station is awash with the evening commute. Thousands of people crowd the platforms, jostling the only still figure who is sitting at the base of the statue of Frederick Stevens. Amir. Then there is a gap in the wall of bodies that swirls around him. Amir gets to his feet.

AMIR
Latika?

Then she is gone in the melee again. Only to reappear.

LATIKA
Amir?

Amir forces himself through the people. Nothing will stop him. Latika too is shoving them aside until they are face-to-face. They stop, look at each other, hold each other's hands tight. The whole station seems frozen, the only movement from a thousand bodies being Amir and Latika.

LATIKA (CONT'D)
I thought we would meet again only in death.

He shakes his head.

AMIR
I knew you'd be watching.

Amir puts his hand on Latika's chin, turns her head gently so that she is facing him. He sees the knife scars on her cheek for the first time. She tries to turn her head, but he won't let her. Runs his hand slowly down the scar. Rests his hand there.

AMIR (CONT'D)
This is our destiny.

He gently kisses the scarred cheek.

AMIR (CONT'D)
This is our destiny.

The camera pulls back and back, rising above the station. The music starts and the frozen station comes alive, two thousand kurta-clad men and saree-clad women dancing in and out and on top of the trains, an unbound celebration of hope and humanity that has at its centre, Amir and Latika.

CONTINUED:

THE END.